

CLEMENCEAU

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CLEMENCEAU



Photo Manuel

M. CLEMENCEAU IN HIS STUDY

Frontispiece

CLEMENCEAU

BY

CAMILLE DUCRAY

TRANSLATED BY

E. ALLEN

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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PREFACE

THERE are few lives that have been so full of incident as that of Georges Clemenceau. There are few men that have had so many, such diverse, and such opposing careers.

Clemenceau made his mark first under the Empire, and remained the outstanding figure during the Commune, the Republic, and in the War.

Under each *régime* and in every task he undertook he was in the forefront of all the greatest happenings of the day and was always the principal actor. He has been an inveterate fighter all his life ; he takes a bitter pleasure in the struggle for the survival of the fittest, for he has a tremendous feeling that it is his destiny to fight and that he has the power to fulfil his destiny.

One must exist, and Clemenceau was determined to exist.

In turn student, teacher, mayor, doctor, municipal councillor, deputy, journalist, man of letters, senator, dramatic author, and minister, he plied his varied trades, carried on his professions and filled his numerous public offices, first setting aside politics for a liberal career and finally giving up that to take the reins of government in his hands.

He is a Frenchman through and through. His life has been a unity of splendid, irreducible, almost savage patriotism. His first public utterance, in the Bordeaux Assembly, of which he is the last survivor, was a youthful and passionate protest against the mutilation of Alsace and Lorraine. Almost his last public utterance—so far—is a hymn of fervour over the restored provinces.

All his life, by his spoken word, by his pen, by his *action*, he has in his own way, as a citizen, preached for the glory of the country he desired to see strong

and invincible. He has been magnificently successful. To-day his heart must beat high with happiness.

Clemenceau reminds us of those glorious crusaders who went forth into the world to fight for a sacred cause—" *God wills it,*" they said.

Like them he has carried on his crusade. Like them he has proclaimed the word of faith and confidence—" *France wills it.*"

He has been heard.

November 11th, 1918

Note.—The last chapter has been added by the translator.

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il n'est pas un de vous qui n'ait pu. Tout le monde, à qui il s'explique
par quelques formes que sa personnalité si vif, apporter un concours passager à
chaque une grande vibration d'humanité

Clemenceau

Il n'est pas un de nous qui ne puisse à toute heure, où qu'il soit placé et sous quelque forme
que sa personnalité se révèle, apporter un concours passager ou durable aux grandes réalisa-
tions d'humanité

G. CLEMENCEAU.



THE STUDENT

CHAPTER I

THE STUDENT

BOYHOOD—STUDIES—VOYAGE TO AMERICA

GEORGES-BENJAMIN CLEMENCEAU was born in the province of Vendée, at Mouilleron-en-Pareds, on September 28th, 1841. Mouilleron-en-Pareds is a village of some 1,500 souls situated in the Bocage, whose inhabitants took such an active part in the civil war that raged over the west of France during the first years of the Revolution.

Clemenceau's father, an old Jacobin, was one of these old country doctors who dabbled in art and took a deep interest in philosophy. In his veins ran the blood of Lareveillère-Lepaux, a member of the Convention and a militant Vendéan, who at the time of the trial of Louis XVI voted for death and against reprieve.

So the elder Clemenceau detested the Empire. He was at daggers drawn with its representatives, and it was in this spirit of opposition, defiance, and even hate that he reared his children. The son was certainly not far behind his father in this respect. He had seen him thrown into prison on the famous December 2nd, and he was quite old enough to understand and to remember.

He did not forget.

The old doctor, who was of independent means, took a very comfortable flat in Nantes at 8 Rue du Calvaire. Felix Platel, who forty years ago contributed to several periodicals under the pseudonym of "Ignotus," tells how he used often to meet on the stair the little boy with his curly black hair and coal-black eyes—the coal a latent fire !

Doctor Clemenceau sent his son to the lycée where some years before Jules Vallès, Jules Verne and many more had worn their breeches shiny.

We may as well say without further

ado that his studies were honest. The scholar, though he was a painstaking lad, was no paragon. Infant prodigies are short-lived. They wear themselves out too soon. By the time he was twelve, Georges Clemenceau was in the fifth class at the lycée.

Let us just run through his record of work. Is it superfluous to fix the small points that are history within History?

Class V.—Latin version, 4th ; classical recitation and *débit* (what a delightful old-world word !), 2nd.

Class IV.—Nothing ; a bad year ; what his teachers call “unequal work.”

Class III.—English, 2nd ; *débit*, 2nd.

Class II.—Chemistry, 3rd ; recitation, 3rd.

Rhetoric class.—A 2nd prize for natural history ; French, English, *débit*, *accessit*.

Philosophy class.—1st prize for Latin version ; 1st prize for French dissertation ; 2nd in general excellence.

Quite a fine record.

The boy found his reward for hard work

in the old village of Mouilleron. In his holidays he used to go back to his native place, and there he did what boys of his age will do—he dreamed dreams.

It was a happy time, and Clemenceau has always remembered it with emotion. He seems to live it all over again a generation later when he thanks the mayor of his village for a congratulatory address :

“ I am more deeply touched than I can say for the simple and noble address that I have received from my native village, which always has a place very near my heart.

“ It is an encouragement, my friends, a real, a warm encouragement that has come to me from the rocks I knew as a boy in this terrible crisis of life or death which a dire fate has let loose upon us ; it is my native land, our heroic land of Vendée who is calling all her children to the supreme fight for the defence of the finest country in the world.”

And he thinks of his old schoolfellows

too, when he thanks them for their friendly letter received at the same time :

“ I have learnt too late to regret not having been a better pupil at the Lycée de Nantes. But that has not prevented my retaining a most vivid memory of the old building, my indulgent teachers, and the cosy fireside of good comradeship.”

After having passed his baccalauréat, Clemenceau did a course at the School of Medicine—like father, like son. The father, however, did very little doctoring, and neither did the son ! But we must not anticipate. We shall find him later on at work.

After about three years of residence, the student left Nantes and went to Paris.

There he arrived one day in the year 1860. He was nineteen years of age. What a number of young men are drawn to the great city to gain their independence and satisfy their youth !

Georges Clemenceau was no exception, but at least he brought a will with him

—the will to *do* something. The beer shops, the cabarets, the Closerie saw but little of him. From his father, who had stayed behind in the country, he had some money which made him richer than many of his friends. He did not have to live in the miserable room that drives the student to the warm and smoky shelter of the café. He had unpretentious but comfortable rooms ; he liked his work and devoted himself to it with pleasure ; that did not prevent him from learning about life. That did not prevent him from taking part in politics.

.

Among the few introductions that Dr. Clemenceau had given his son, the warmest was to Arago, a well-known public man of the time. His great height, his long hair, his fine Southern head, his knowledge and the attraction of his speech made an irresistible impression on the young Clemenceau. Through him he

soon got into touch and made friends with all the men of note of the Empire, that is to say fervent and active republicans. He soon found his place among them, and out of working hours he entered the *mêlée*.

His beginnings were modest. Clemenceau was not of those who mount on tables and harangue an audience that is already convinced. As a matter of fact he had already gained a slight notoriety among the young men of the schools. The students used to get excited over politics and meddle far too much in things political—at least so thought the authorities. Tardieu, the Dean of the Faculty, who owed his appointment to the Empire and wanted to behave as a good servant ought, had had the idea of forming an association of students the better to keep the turbulent youth of the place in hand. When this plan came to the knowledge of the group of students Clemenceau belonged to—an absolutely republican group—they saw the trap and

sent a deputation to the Dean. Their ultimatum was that Tardieu should not trouble to establish an association, and that the students themselves should found their own groups. The Dean had to give in. It was agreed that a little committee of students should draw up the statutes, and this committee consisted of Georges Clemenceau, Léonce Levrault, and Albert Regnard. In spite of the care they took not to let their cherished republican and liberal ideas, which they thought would be the safeguard of the association, creep into the wording of the statutes, the Minister of the Interior set an absolute veto on them and they were not accepted.

The young men had to abandon their plan willy-nilly, but at any rate Clemenceau's name began to be passed approvingly from mouth to mouth among the members of the young opposition.

But let us follow the student step by step. We come now to the year 1862, which was one of the milestones in his

career. We shall see from the following why it was also a turning-point.

Listened to and admired with that cordial and confident admiration that students have for the fellow-student who can dominate the liveliest, convince the timid, settle differences and organise manifestations and students' processions, Clemenceau found his popularity ever increasing among the young men of the schools.

His studies did not prevent him in any way from conducting an ardent campaign for the Republic. But manifesting republican sentiments under the Empire was not without its peril, as he found from bitter experience.

To celebrate the liberties proclaimed by the great Revolution, which had put an end to the reign of Louis XVI, he had conceived and organised a grand programme which consisted in nothing less than going in a body to the Place de la Bastille on February 24th, to celebrate the advent of the republican era. All

the editorial staffs of the advanced journals to which he contributed—for “Clemenceau the Journalist” dates even from these distant times—were called to assist. So also was the restive Latin Quarter.

The programme was carried out in every detail. The thing was an enormous success. The Empire had only to wait and see! It did! So well, in fact, that its police officers arrested the young manifestor by the coat-collar and conducted him without ceremony, but without hurt, to the nearest police station. From there he was sent to Mazas. The journey would have been quite commonplace but for the fact that the prisoner made it in “Black Maria” seated on the lap of a butcher’s boy who had murdered his mate. It was, to use the victim’s own expression, “in that moving cell for two, a distraction, a pleasure, a joy.”

Clemenceau has recounted with all his usual verve his arrival at the prison, and

it would be a great pity not to leave him to tell his own story :

“ I was put in a cell where there was a bath filled with water the colour of *café au lait*. A distinctly dirty thief was disporting himself in it. When he had had enough of it I was invited to splash in the same liquid. Merely as a matter of economy of course the same bath did for every one. The authorities were most careful about cleanliness and ordered that every new arrival should have a bath. When I made a fuss I was politely informed by the warders that they would take me one by the head and one by the heels and give me a taste of the *café au lait*. I made a bargain with them and was allowed to step in up to my knees only.”

On April 11th, Clemenceau appeared for trial and was defended by M. Hubard. The Court passed the following sentence :

“ In view of the fact that the proceedings and evidence prove that on February 23rd Clemenceau committed an act of

direct provocation, without result, on a body of soldiers ;

“ That he did in fact write, distribute to be affixed and himself affix a certain number of placards in which he called upon a category of individuals to proceed to a certain place with the aim of forming a body which might disturb the public peace ;

“ Clemenceau is sentenced to one month's imprisonment and half costs.”

It is as well to give the terms of a sentence which in no way stains Clemenceau's honour and is indeed evidence of his honest republican convictions.

The month's imprisonment, counting the custody before trial and the delay in release, lasted sixty-three days. “ An accident ! ” Clemenceau philosophically concluded. And he went back to his studies.

From that time the medical student worked hard at his medicine. Without shutting himself off entirely from the

young-republican movement which collected so many young men of the schools, the universities, and colleges in the common aim of opposition to the Imperial *régime*, he attended his classes and was an assiduous frequenter of the libraries and hospitals. There is no doubt but that even at that time his ambition was to play a part in public life when age and events made it possible. But he had the sense to want a solid education, and for nearly three years he kept out of all political manifestations, which would have taken up his time and forced him to relax his studies too much. He gave up his rooms and lived in. On May 13th, 1865, he passed his doctorate with success.

He was now twenty-four years of age.

.

Georges Clemenceau, now a doctor, could have followed his father's wishes, availed himself of the assistance he was only too ready to give, and sought his

future in the professoriate. His professor, Doctor Robin, was anxious to push his pupil into this career. But the son and pupil was far too keen on liberty, far too athirst for experience to persevere in a career in which he would have had to submit for several years more to the influence of the master. He suddenly shook off the shackles, left his professor, fled from his fellow-students and quitted the Latin Quarter and its rowdiness, Paris and its excitement, France and its Imperial government.

He went to London, where he stayed only a few weeks, pressed as he was to pursue his journey to a farther country which attracted him irresistibly by its statute of democracy, the organisation of its institutions, and the peculiarity of its customs.

America immediately opened up a new world to him. Man individualist and independent, the community responsible, the province autonomous, the State organised, were so many subjects of study

for the observer and student. With the help of his father's money he could visit the towns, study the people, get to the bottom of things. In this way he acquired very solid ideas about the life of the United States in all its bearings. Between times, to keep his hand in, he did some writing in the shape of journalistic reports and *belles-lettres*.

Life in the United States passed agreeably. Study, lounging, newspaper writing, travelling, and even philosophy matured the young wanderer, developed his already sound education and amplified his literary, artistic, scientific, and economic knowledge. His existence was enviable.

But suddenly a rock appeared ahead, and Georges Clemenceau had the opportunity of proving that he had within himself, in spite of ill fortune, that very concise understanding of life, that instinct for the stroke that would keep him afloat, that feeling for action which

dominated his doings throughout life and guided him safely through the worst difficulties.

Clemenceau's father was finding his son's sojourn in a foreign land a little long. According to his idea this *Wanderjahr* was being prolonged out of all measure, and the career which he himself had followed and which he longed to see continued by his son seemed to him to be in danger of being too easily abandoned. A young man of twenty-eight who finds his pleasure among the French philosophers and goes to America for the express purpose of interpreting them, who indulges in journalism so far away from his own country, and who leads the life of a *dilettante* of independent means, did not at all correspond with the quiet and respectable future Dr. Clemenceau had mapped out for his son away in his country home. He used the most powerful means at his disposal—the means that parents quite rightly believe they are justified in employing in deal-

ing with prodigal sons : he cut off supplies.

The young man did not lose an hour in vain lamentations. His native pride prevented his appealing to generous and compassionate friends, so he decided immediately to give up his *dilettante* existence and seek the advantages of some work sufficiently remunerative to allow him to live as he wanted to.

He soon found what he wanted. He obtained the post of teacher of French literature and history in a girls' school at Stamford, on the outskirts of New York. The conditions were good : classes from Monday morning to Tuesday evening ; freedom for the rest of the week. His salary replaced his father's allowance. If we add his earnings from literary work—and they were not the least of his resources—we can see that Clemenceau had quite enough to live on very comfortably.

The whole business besides did not seem to be so bad, for his class days

were not without charm. The teacher of literature continued to live in New York and it was quite a pleasant excursion for him to go each week to the spry little village where his liveliness, his wit, and his character always found him a warm welcome.

We must remember, too, that America knows none of the rigid customs of France. It is quite correct among the Americans for young men and girls to chat together, dance together, and go excursions together without an attendant chaperone. It is quite permissible for a teacher, young, witty, and French though he be, to be on terms of friendly *camaraderie* with his pupils, even if they are girls, out of school hours. So Clemenceau had established the most amicable relations with his scholars.

But young men are caught at that game and young Georges did not escape the caprice of fortune, a fortune carrying a quiverful of arrows. The heroine's name was Mary Plummer. She was

an orphan and lived under the guardianship of a Protestant uncle and aunt who were inexorable on the head of religion. So was Clemenceau—but from another point of view. Indeed things did not seem as if they could be arranged. The theory of civil marriage which the young man professed to hold spoilt everything. A materialist has no place in romance. Besides, it is not at all probable that Miss Mary, who was of irreproachable upbringing, was at all minded to elope.

Clemenceau did the only thing he conscientiously could so as not to transgress the laws of hospitality. He departed by the next boat. That does not mean that he left his fiancée with a light heart. On the contrary his soul was filled with her image and with regret for all the projects he had embarked upon. The young people exchanged letters, which on Clemenceau's side were so persuasive that Miss Mary Plummer allowed herself to be convinced.

The fiancé immediately put to sea again,

Did he tell her that his short stay in Paris had cost him his first duel ?

In the presence of Farabeuf, who was later Director of Anatomical Studies in the Faculty of Paris, and who was bound by a warm friendship to Clemenceau, a student of the name of Prompt had made insulting remarks about the latter at table one day. Farabeuf had taken him up pretty smartly, and a discussion arose that soon degenerated into a dispute. There were blows exchanged. Clemenceau, who was told about the scene next day, had no desire to leave his comrades the task of defending him or avenging him. Seconds were called, who did not settle matters at all—quite the reverse. They were honest seconds. Prompt and Clemenceau found themselves face to face in the Clamart wood, with pistols in their hands. Two shots were exchanged without result. There is a piquant detail to the story : the adversaries did not know each other then and have never seen each other since,

However, at Stamford, on Clemenceau's return, past difficulties had been smoothed over ; the recalcitrant uncle had at last agreed to fall in with the wishes of the young people.

The private life of public men does not belong to History when it is not mixed up in it. His family life has no place in this book.

Suffice it to say that Clemenceau made a home. He has three children. He came back to France, for good this time, with his young wife, and a long time after he applied for a divorce to unloose the nuptial knot tied in America.

The political personality of the man now begins to reveal itself. In the coming years he was to play a very considerable rôle. But the physical portrait never varies, though the course of years may burden the shoulders, whiten the temples, deepen the wrinkles, and emphasise his calm energy. His face at forty reveals the same traits as in the man of thirty. At seventy, and now at seventy-

seven, he is still the same with his high forehead, his thick drooping moustache, his keen eyes sunk deep beneath his bushy eyebrows.

He is of fine stamp.

THE DOCTOR



CHAPTER II

THE DOCTOR

STUDENT—THESIS—PRACTICIAN

GEORGES CLEMENCEAU received the degree of doctor in medicine on May 13th, 1865.

For three years, in a fine access of ardour for work, he had ceased—or nearly so—to take an active part in the things of the Empire, that is to say, to give voice to ideas far in advance of those of the Republic. Two months of drab captivity had made him wise. The Hospice of Bicêtre, where he was in residence, after three years of medical study at Nantes, and the classes at the university, where he was one of Professor Robin's favourite students, took up the best part of his time. He could not complain of that, for he passed his

thesis brilliantly. The subject was : *The Generation of Anatomic Elements*. In this thesis the author followed the tradition of the "Encyclopædists," and upheld the principle of the heterogeneity of the human race where like does not beget like. It is impossible, so he contends, for human beings to be born in any other way.

By such a doctrine the young doctor revealed himself as a philosopher and metaphysician combating Leibnitz and disputing Kant. It was less a work of medicine than of pure science. It was in addition a very clear and concise exposition of the works of Charles Robin. I have already said that Clemenceau was one of his good pupils. He was also one of his good friends. When the thesis was republished in 1867, the master wrote a preface for it. That was the crown of his student's career.

To tell the truth, theses like the young doctor's were much in fashion at that time. Ferdinand Taule, Clemenceau's

fellow-student who contributed with him to the *Travail*, who was acquainted with the same judges and the same prisons and who was for a very long time director of the Lariboisière Hospital, had also presented a very materialistic thesis. And was it not Onimus, another of his fellow-students, who came before the examiners with a thesis on "Senile Decay," a discreet but vicious allusion to the members of the Senate?

Clemenceau, twenty-four and a doctor, stops short. Is it good-bye to the fine hopes of his father, who was urging his son to a professional career? Is it a final renunciation of the art exercised from father to son by many generations of Clemenceaus?

In the realm of medicine, indeed, the student had a grand aristocracy behind him. Pierre-Benjamin Clemenceau, his grandfather, was a doctor. He was the son of Pierre-Paul Clemenceau, Seigneur of Colombier, delegate to the Legislative Body in 1806, who submitted a medical

thesis on Fructidor 9 of the Year XII on "The Properties and Uses of Water." It is well known—a curious coincidence—that Clemenceau is a water-drinker!

We had better end our incursion into genealogy there. Let us just mention a Paul Clemenceau, Seigneur of Pasty and of La Serrie, born in 1625, who was an expert master apothecary.

The last descendant of a line like that threw up his career and went off to America.

.

When Clemenceau came back to Paris, the Commune gave him other things to think about and he had no time to practise the art of Æsculapius. He waited till he was a municipal councillor to open a free clinic at 23 Rue des Trois-Frères, Montmartre—his constituency, if one may call it so.

But here we must let one of the *Figaro* journalists speak. He writes a most

vivid article on this subject in 1879, when Clemenceau was a Deputy :

“ Every Sunday and every Wednesday, from nine to eleven in the morning, he lives at Rue des Trois-Frères, where a crowd, a mob, an army has been waiting for him since eight o'clock.

“ It is at the end of a courtyard about five yards square that his dispensary is situated. It is composed of three weird rooms which we shall try to describe. The first opens off the corner of a narrow corridor. It serves as waiting-room. There would scarcely be comfortable elbow-room in it for five children, but more than thirty people are crammed into it, waiting their turn and pushing back those that would crowd it out still more. On the deal table and cane chairs ailing women are seated. A few men are propped against the mantelpiece which is entirely devoid of ornament. Against each window-pane on the left is pressed a face looking out disdainfully on the late-

comers crowding the courtyard and stretching in a long queue under the passage-way of the first block of buildings and out into the street.

“In a corner of this sort of waiting-room there are two flags—tricolour if you please ;—the staffs of which are capped, not by the usual figure of La République with her red head-dress, but simply by a pike.

“Besides the door of entry there are two other little doors, one on the right and the other on the left at the side of the window. The first, made of solid wood, opens into the kitchen transformed into an office. That is where M. Clemenceau’s secretary sits. You will wonder if this scribe is a doctor too. Not at all. So he only interviews people with requests to make and those requiring their member’s protection. In two minutes he has promised the family of a man who has been deported that he will be got back soon. In the next two, he takes a note of an elector’s demand for employment.

“ The door we have not spoken of is half wood, half glass, *the panes chalked over*.

“ Let us open it, after three hours of waiting !

“ We find ourselves in M. Clemenceau’s consulting room. Five pictures framed and hung on a threepence-a-roll wall-paper, an oak bureau, a mahogany arm-chair, an iron stove with its pipe climbing up the wall with the help of dangling wire ; on the windows, curtains hung on strings which begin at the last pane and stretch exactly to the middle of the last pane.—That is the framework.

“ A man of about thirty-eight, with close-cropped greyish hair, big black eyes, a thick black moustache, the complexion of a monk, a frank and open manner, an outstretched hand, always correctly dressed. That is M. Clemenceau. Do you know M. Tallien, the present head of Cluny ? He is very like him, but M. Clemenceau smiles more pleasantly and more often. Imagine M. Tallien having made millions in his enterprise and you

have the Member for Montmartre. When you have seen him in his room, completely at your service, affable, anxious to please, obliging, you wonder how such a man can have ideas so alarming to certain people.

“The best—and the worst—of the room we are in, is that it has two doors : the one we have just come in at and the one every one goes out of, which opens on to the courtyard. As soon as it opens the whole queue of inquirers assails him with ‘Monsieur Clemenceau ! Monsieur Clemenceau ! . . . Just a word ! . . . I’ve been here all morning ! . . . I haven’t had time for breakfast !’

“‘It’s a perfect insurrection,’ says Clemenceau.

“Then the other door is pushed open by the people in the waiting-room who are terrified lest the last-comers will be interviewed first. The women of course shriek louder than the men.

“‘So be it—ladies before gentlemen,’ he says.

“ And laughing, for he laughs always, he puts the women in the front row and lets into his room those who are willing to consult him together.

“ Do you remember the courtyard where the Zouave Jacob used to ply his trade ten years ago ? Well, that is it.

“ From time to time the would-be clients open a space for a group of ‘ well-dressed people who have an official look about them.’

“ ‘ The Harmony of Montmartre,’ says one of them to M. Clemenceau, who pops out his head.”

In this consulting-room and office for political and electoral business there were sometimes unexpected misunderstandings. From Clemenceau himself we must borrow the account of an amusing contretemps. It proves at the same time that the journalist was not stretching the truth in describing the preceding scene :

“ It was in olden times when I had a dispensary at Montmartre.

“ Pray do not let this ambitious term awaken in you the idea of a hospital organisation. A consulting-room and a waiting-room—that was the rudimentary installation I put at the disposal of the public. Ill people came. Hecklers came. And it sometimes happened that the same person united both capacities.

“ At times there were strange misunderstandings. One day I saw a consumptive patient coming in. Without shutting the waiting-room door, I set my patient down in a corner of my room and said to him in a hurried tone : ‘ Undress.’ While the poor wretch was preparing for examination, another patient appeared on the scene. Another consumptive ! I planted him in another corner, and repeated still more authoritatively this time : ‘ Undress.’ A third visitor appeared. He was a big, strong man with rosy cheeks and showed no sign of illness to the most practised eye. He had heard the brusque way I greeted the two men who preceded him. He

came in and saw his mates undressing. Without hesitation he flung off his coat and waistcoat and letting his trousers fall said placidly : ' I want a situation in the Post Office.' The poor wretch thought it was the custom to appear in a shirt in my presence, whatever one had to say to me."

That kind of misunderstanding, no doubt, broke the monotony of a thankless task. In these few years Clemenceau saw plenty of misery and suffering. He did not scruple to go among the poor and give them remedies and carry them comfort.

These were indeed, as he says, "unsavoury tasks, these errands to the worst districts in the Butte, these visits, short as they were, to the unhealthy cells of these infested hives where so many working-class families are crammed together under the fumes of decaying refuse, only quitting the germs of death in the factories for the infection of a horrible dwelling."

Dr. Clemenceau, except for his dispensary, practised little or none. That does not mean that he took no interest in medicine and surgery. Quite the contrary. I remember a lecture given in Paris in 1913 by Dr. Carrel on his return from America in which he gave the results of his most recent labours. It was, I think, in Dr. Pozzi's lecture-room at the Broca hospital. Clemenceau, who had a sincere friendship and a great admiration for Pozzi, was in the front row of the audience. He had even put on his old hospital uniform, and he was the doctor's most attentive listener.

In 1885 he gave up practice. But it is a point to be noticed that he figured in the directories till 1906 as follows :

"CLEMENCEAU (G.-B.) 1865. From twelve to one by appointment, 8 Rue Franklin."

But I am afraid a prescription in his handwriting is a rarity and it is a real find for autograph collectors.

THE POLITICIAN

CHAPTER III

THE POLITICIAN

MAYOR—MUNICIPAL COUNCILLOR—DEPUTY—
SENATOR—MINISTER

IT was 1870.

The war the populace did not believe in, but which was foreseen by the enlightened, had been let loose by Bismarck. With what emotion the news of the declaration of war on July 18th, forced on France by the treachery of the German Chancellor, was received on the other side of the Atlantic one can imagine.

Clemenceau, who had had no thought of returning to France just yet, made an instant decision. He rushed back to his home and went direct to Paris after leaving his wife in Nantes to the protection of his family.

The crossing had been long and events had marched quickly. Alsace invaded, Lorraine lost, the siege of Metz, Rezonville, Saint-Privat marked the downfall of the armies of the Emperor. Sedan was the finishing touch.

On September 4th Clemenceau appeared on the scene and took up his abode at Rue Capron, Montmartre, with his old friend Lafont. The fall of the Emperor had been announced, the deputation of Paris had formed itself into a government for the National Defence, and Etienne Arago had been nominated mayor of Paris. Enough there to keep the republicans busy. Clemenceau entered the lists. Arago remembered the young student, so solicitously confided to his care by the good doctor of Vendée. And as he had seen the son at work, and knew his energetic temperament, he sent him to take over the *mairie* belonging to the 18th arrondissement.

When Clemenceau presented himself, he found three mayors already installed,

perhaps by Favre, Simon, Pelletan, or Crémieux, for there was no lack of candidates, and the members of the new government had not yet been able to ensure sufficient unity of control. The arrival of the new mayor solved the problem, however. He was not a man to bow to a compromise. With Arago's help, he cleared the place. Then he took possession of his *mairie* and set to work.

Even for a man of grasp and will-power the task was no easy one. The investment of Paris on the day when Jules Favre and Bismarck met at Ferrières to try to get as advantageous armistice conditions out of each other as possible, made conditions of life in the capital extremely difficult. Trochu, a brave soldier, but a detestable politician who was afraid of compromising his popularity, opposed a state of siege being proclaimed, the first effect of which would have been to submit to military authority a civil population including many malcontents. Food, fuel, the first necessities of life,

were wasted and ill distributed during the first days of the siege and were soon lacking altogether.

Clemenceau as mayor of Montmartre showed an intelligent activity. For the little children he found milk ; for the homeless, shelter ; and for all, food, light and coal. And as he was one of those who was determined to offer a proud resistance to the enemy he had to attend to the arming of the National Guard, bring up their strength, see that they were properly drilled, examine the fortifications, organise civil education, and fight the elements of reaction that still survived the new Republic.

During this time he gathered round him a band of willing spirits, as witness the bill which he had pasted on the walls in his district on October 17th, which ends with this grand appeal :

“ All those who desire to contribute in an active fashion to the defence of their country are requested to register their names without delay.”

Clemenceau, the thirty-year-old mayor, who kept watch and ward over his district, leading them with a great flourish of trumpets—but in perfect discipline!—who disputed with the central *mairie* and quarrelled with its members, who claimed his due when supplies were short, who had made his *mairie* a model town-house, the bold and ingenious, active and enterprising mayor was adored by his people.

They let him see it. On February 8th, 1871, he was elected by 96,000 votes to represent them in the National Assembly.

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Ten days before, the Versailles armistice had completed the fall of Paris. The new deputy departed for Bordeaux. His presence at the moment when the fate of France was being discussed was henceforward of more use in the inner council of the Assembly than in the town-house at Montmartre, where he had left behind to administer current affairs his assistant and devoted friend Lafont, with

whom he had found shelter on his return from America.

At Bordeaux, when the question of ratification of the peace preliminaries came up, Clemenceau was adamant.

There was an unforgettable sitting on March 1st in the hall of the Théâtre Louis. It was six o'clock in the evening. Under the crude light of the great chandelier Jules Grévy presided. In the midst of a weighty silence he announced the result of the voting: 107 deputies had voted against the peace preliminaries. Among them were Hugo, Edgard Quinet, Thiers, Louis Blanc, and Carnot and Ranc, and many more.

There was also Clemenceau.

Each and all of them declared in an address, now famous, that they joined with the deputies of Alsace and Lorraine in considering as null and void the treaty which deprived France of her well-loved provinces.

Is it surprising that Clemenceau associated himself with the vote of the

first orators of the country, the great patriots who drew themselves up in bristling array against a barbarous Prussia ?

One must have seen the man and heard him in that other memorable meeting on March 1st, 1918, when there took place in the Sorbonne the most poignant, the most sublime, the most French ceremony dedicated to the glory of Alsace-Lorraine and her faithfulness to the motherland, to understand what hate "against the worst enemies of humanity," what confidence and hope in the days to come, what unshakable determination to carry out the great work in hand there has always been in Georges Clemenceau.

How the meeting thrilled when Clemenceau recalled the armistice of that other war :

" The trial began for me in the Assembly of Bordeaux when I saw our best friends of Alsace torn from the French Parliament, when I saw how soon the memory

of that terrible tragedy, which has remained alive within me since that fatal day, was drowned in the cruel indifference of the peoples of the world, eager to accommodate themselves to anything and ignoring the inevitableness of the revenge of justice and liberty."

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The Assembly had decided to move to Versailles. Thiers and the Ministers would go to Paris. A crisis seemed imminent. The excited populace, impressed by the defiant measures of the Parliament, claimed the presence of their mayors. On the evening of March 4th, when Clemenceau was at a meeting of the Left party, some friends came and told him how urgent it was for him to return to the capital. They painted him a black enough picture, which was only too well justified, of the seething unrest reigning in Paris and in particular in his own district. Since February 28th, things had been growing worse and worse. As

early as then even, the Central Committee, who were supposed to keep order in Paris, but who were as yet only called the "Republican Federation of the National Guard," had had the tocsin sounded. Battalions of the National Guard had taken possession of the guns the Government had left at Neuilly and on the Plain of Monceau, and had dragged some of them up to Montmartre with the vague intention of purloining them from the Germans.

Clemenceau no longer doubted that his place was in Paris. He went off at once and arrived on Sunday morning in the capital after a journey that would have seemed long and tedious but for the company of Admiral Pothuau, who also was recalled to Paris on urgent business.

Arrived in Paris, Clemenceau's first act was to rush off to his *mairie*. There he found his assistant Lafont, who gave him a description of past events

and a straight account of the present situation.

The people had mounted 171 guns on the Butte and these were jealously guarded by the National Guard. The inhabitants had grown accustomed to consider these guns as their property, and swore in their excitement that no power on earth, even the Government itself, would dispossess them of them. As a matter of fact, however, this question of the guns had been grossly exaggerated. Clemenceau took a sane view of things, reduced the facts to their true value, calmed his most turbulent constituents, and went off at once to find Picard, Minister of the Interior.

Picard did not hide the fact that it was extremely disagreeable to the Government to see the guns which formed part of their war material in the possession of the rabble. Nor did he conceal the fact that he was seeking for some means of getting them back.

Clemenceau tried to make things

straight. He saw d'Aurelles de Paladines, the General of the National Guard at Montmartre. But the persistent way he went about things made him suspect to the very people he was trying to serve. In the 18th arrondissement, the rumour spread that he was a traitor. He was a traitor because he had gone to a Government office ! He was a traitor because he had discussed matters with the Government ! Suspicion and defiance were still further accentuated. But Clemenceau surmounted them. His persuasion finally won over even the most recalcitrant, and he managed to satisfy them that as the possession of the guns was an obstacle to internal peace and agreement they must give back the guns. In fact, Captain Bertaut, commanding a company of the National Guard belonging to the 61st battalion, undertook, with the support of his company, to give the artillery back their war material.

But everything went wrong.

On the 18th, at six o'clock in the morn-

ing, Clemenceau was wakened by Dereure, a member of the Committee of Vigilance in the 18th arrondissement. There was an open hostility between the two men and Dereure made himself as disagreeable as possible :

“ The guns have been taken. Didn't you know ? ”

“ No.”

It was true that he did not know, that he could not have known, for the Government had taken these measures during the night, without informing the mayor, whom they also suspected, for did he not hold converse with the people of Montmartre and the National Guard ?

Clemenceau set out as quickly as he could and ran up on to the heights. There he found General Lecomte, who was in charge of the expedition ordered by Thiers.

“ This is a terrible pity,” the mayor said to him. “ I suppose I can do nothing to stop it ? ”

He returned to his *mairie* after visiting

one of the National Guard who had been wounded, for there had been a few shots exchanged when the regular troops had carried the Butte by storm at daybreak.

Then the whole day long there was a stream of inhabitants bombarding his office.

“ You have played us false ; you told us they would not take the guns by force,” they kept repeating. “ Traitor,” was what they called this energetic, honest, patriotic man who had done everything in his power to bring peace to his district. No wonder such insults and such injustice brought tears to his eyes.

Outside, the rabble grumbled and grew. They got hold of General Lecomte and soon after of General Thomas, who had been recognised. They were taken to the Château-Rouge, a public dancing-hall transformed into a guard-room. Then from there the crowd, by this time delirious with excitement and completely out of hand, led or pushed their victims

into the garden of a small house in the Rue des Rosiers and there massacred them.

Before this happened, Simon Mayer, a captain of the National Guard, rushed round to the *mairie* where Clemenceau had been kept since morning a slave to the duties of his office. Just when he would have liked to be able to leave his office and go out into the street, to preach calm, to appeal to the patriotism of every single man and woman, he was kept in the town-house, because he wanted his presence there to be a protection to the soldiers—*sergents de ville*—who had been seized by the mob and imprisoned there.

“Come along as quickly as you can,” said Mayer to Clemenceau. “They are going to shoot the generals.”

Completely taken aback at such news, and full of anxiety, the mayor waited for no further explanation, but ran to the Buttes with all speed, putting on his scarf on the way.

He was too late.

His attitude during that day gave rise to the most violent criticisms and the most bitter polemics on the part of his adversaries. How often has he been reproached with this "Too late" !

Yet so little had he been the accomplice of the Montmartre revolutionaries that three days after that day of carnage he was hunted out of the *mairie*. Even that measure did not seem rigorous enough to those who had been led away by blind fury. The mayor's private house was also occupied by the military.

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Clemenceau then went to join the deputies meeting at Versailles. Even the great injustice of his fellow-citizens had not cast him down. Deceived, underestimated, or misunderstood by the two opposing parties, his one care was still to attempt a reconciliation between Paris and Versailles, to mediate, to find even yet some common ground of understanding.

Scarcely had the Government moved to Versailles, where they too were forced to take refuge, than Clemenceau was back in Paris, braving dangers and adversaries. He found Lafont, who had also left the *mairie*, saw Lockroy, Rochefort,¹ Floquet, and Ranc, and with them succeeded in realising the idea of a league of conciliation comprising deputies, mayors, merchants, and all citizens who wanted their fellows to have a fair and reasonable organisation and avoid the horrors of civil war.

On April 5th this group published a manifesto rallying immediately all lovers of order and all patriots, and demanding certain rights, of which we must quote the following:

“ The undersigned citizens, united under the name of ‘ *Republican Union for the Rights of Paris*,’ have adopted the following programme, which appears to them to express the wishes of the Paris populace :

¹ See Camille Ducray : *Henri Rochefort, 1831-1913*.

“ Recognition of the Republic.

“ Recognition of the right of Paris to govern itself and to regulate by a Council freely elected and sovereign within the limits of its functions, its police, its finance, its public relief, its education, and the exercise of liberty of conscience.

“ The protection of Paris to be entrusted exclusively to the National Guard, composed of all valid electors.”

A most laudable but perilous attitude !

In spite of the purity of their zeal and their noble disinterestedness, the reasonable but firm demands of the League were not long in placing its members in a most delicate situation with respect to the Government of Versailles on the one hand, and the revolutionary Central Committee on the other.

Clemenceau and his colleagues were nicely placed between the devil and the deep sea. Suspected by the one party and disowned by the other, these men, whose one desire was to calm passions

and reconcile two parties who did all they could to widen the breach, found existence very precarious.

Clemenceau was remarkably constant in his attempts at reconciliation and took part in every movement in that direction. On March 20th, in the Assembly, he introduced a bill authorising the election of a municipal council for Paris, composed of eighty members. He saw in this measure a real possibility of uniting hostile parties in a common programme.

“If an announcement could be made in the name of the true government,” he explained to the Assembly, “that municipal elections were going to take place, things would settle themselves. It is my firm conviction that if you do not at once pass this bill, we shall find ourselves plunged in chaos.”

As a matter of fact the disastrous events which were about to take place justified these prophetic words.

Clemenceau also made a speech at the Hôtel de Ville, in which he censured those

who had refused to recognise the Assembly of Bordeaux as a legislative body—the men like Pyat, Vermorel, and Grousset, who persisted in encouraging a revolutionary movement that was ruining Paris and exposing her to the unpleasant reprisals that the Versailles people would not fail to carry out.

By force of insistence, by sheer obstinacy, he managed at last to get an agreement signed between the mayors and their assistants, the Seine deputies, and the members of the Central Committee fixing the municipal elections for March 26th. With Floquet and Lockroy he offered himself as a candidate, as he thought that might possibly bring about a reconciliation.

But ungrateful Montmartre gave him scarcely 700 votes. Under the circumstances he felt he could not even retain his seat as deputy, and immediately sent in his resignation to Versailles.

Clemenceau was not sorry to have a little independence again. He gave him-

self up more and more to the *Ligue des Droits*, which at his instigation prepared a programme of propaganda to have the Congress of Bordeaux recognised in the provinces. He was appointed with Ville-neuve, Le Chevalier, Corbon, and Floquet, all members of the League, to hold a series of lectures in the different departments. They left Paris without a hitch, armed with passports all in order. That, however, did not prevent their each being arrested in turn by the police of the Ministry of the Interior.

Clemenceau alone escaped the clutches of the Government. He passed through Alençon, carried out his programme, went to Nantes and proceeded to Bordeaux, where he found it impossible to attempt to hold a meeting. He headed for Paris, but he had to make a long détour eastwards to throw the police, who were following most closely on his tracks, off the scent.

Finally on the night of May 21st he arrived at Saint-Denis. The barriers were

closed. The army of Versailles had just entered Paris. Clemenceau knew only too well what a useless risk he would run if he tried to force his way in. An anecdote told by Louis Fiaux some years after gives a very good idea of the danger he was running by returning to the capital :

“ On May 24th or 25th, a young Brazilian was walking along Rue Papillon. National Guards with their tricolour brassards suddenly fell upon him. He was rather like Clemenceau. Soldiers came to the aid of these champions of the law and carried the offender off to the Pépinière barracks.

“ The poor wretch gesticulated, protested, demanded an arbiter—unfortunately for himself. He was taken before a colonel who had been in Mexico and knew some words of Spanish. He questioned the prisoner in his jargon, and when the latter hesitated, and could not understand (the Brazilians speak Portuguese), ‘ What,’ cried the infuriated Colonel, ‘ you are

a Brazilian and you don't know *Spanish*, your native language! He must be Clemenceau! Shoot him!'

"Luckily for the poor wretch, during his transit from the Rue Papillon a cousin of his had had the presence of mind to rush off and find a consul, who arrived in time to save his fellow-countryman."

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Meantime Clemenceau had succeeded in reaching La Vendée.

The events of the Commune had a sequel for the mayor of Montmartre. It was in September, after the trial of the murderers of the two generals. Major Poussargues, who had been caught by the *fédérés* at the same time as General Lecomte, whom he had served under, but had managed to escape assassination, talked of Clemenceau in such an excessively insulting way that Clemenceau at the end of the trial sent two friends to him to demand reparation. The weapons chosen were pistols.

"I could kill you," Clemenceau declared, "but seeing you are a French officer I'll content myself with wounding you."

And he did wound him severely with a bullet in the thigh.

But how many more duels his political career was to cost him !

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The turmoil was over. The Treaty of Frankfort had taken its great revenge and fixed the destinies of France. The battles of Père-Lachaise had sealed the fate of Paris. Town and country, ravaged and bleeding, were thrilled with a new and supreme ardour in their very exhaustion. Life began once more.

In the new organisation there was need of men capable of surmounting the tide and above all of refloating the municipal barque. So when Paris on July 23rd elected its Municipal Council, Montmartre, returning to a sane view of things and at last recognising all the dominant qualities of their old mayor,

elected Clemenceau, now returned from Vendée, to represent them at the Hôtel de Ville. In 1874 he was once more re-elected. Six thousand electors gave him their votes. In the following session his colleagues chose him as secretary and offered him successively the vice-presidency and then the presidency of the Municipal Assembly.

When he took his seat in the presidential chair in November 1875, he made a speech which won him unanimous approbation :

“ Let us show every one what can be done by application to business, by work, disinterestedness, and uprightness. Let our management be above all criticism ; let us by the freedom and publicity of our discussions and our actions associate the whole city in our work so that they may exercise incessant control over their representatives. By that means we shall have gained a great victory for the cause of municipal franchise, and fulfilled once and for all the grand promise so long

postponed: Paris for the Parisians, for the good of France and the Republic."

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The inhabitants of the Clignancourt district no doubt found that their representative was doing well by them, and that they had for councillor a man of limitless ambition. In February 1876, at the legislative elections he was adopted as a candidate by the radical republican committee.

Clemenceau promised his adherence in a letter of which more than one passage deserves to be quoted :

"The aim we have in view is to go on with the great renovation of 1789, begun by the French bourgeoisie and abandoned by them before its final achievement; it is to re-establish the social peace which successive governments—all the more to blame the more enlightened they are—have so grievously compromised by measures of reaction and in-

timidation ; it is to re-establish social peace by the simple development of justice and liberty—a republican peace.

“What better way of preserving peace than by putting into practice the necessary liberties, that is to say all legitimate liberties ? Who could doubt the efficacy of this plan when we see how for twenty-four years systematic repression of the French spirit has ended in periodic explosions in which we have drunk to the dregs the horrors of civil war ?

“What sounder measure of peace and justice than the reform of taxation, the fair division of its burdens in proportion to contributive capacity, the reduction of the drain on produce and labour, which would so powerfully assist in the amelioration of the lot of the greatest number ? ”

As one can well imagine, this lyrical election address carried off a majority of votes. On February 2nd, Clemenceau was elected deputy by 15,204 votes against 3,772 given to his opponent. He im-

mediately handed in his resignation as municipal councillor.

From that time forward he took a preponderating place among his colleagues and his speeches on the side of the opposition were as numerous as they were resounding.

His *début* was made in a speech demanding full and complete amnesty for those condemned under the Commune. But there was still too much ill-feeling abroad, and he simply found himself up against an opposition who did all they could to put him in the wrong, but who did not succeed in intimidating him. It needed all his firm allegiance to Gambetta to prevent him the following year from indulging in these challenging speeches, of which he became a past master in the course of the years to come.

He was re-elected on October 18th, 1877, by his district, which from that time onward remained faithful to him. That gave him the opportunity of becoming a member of the *Comité des*

Dix-Huit, of demanding that an accusation be brought against the ministers of the Sixteenth of May, of speaking in favour of Blanqui, and of still further extending the influence over his colleagues that he had been increasingly exercising from day to day.

On August 21st, 1881, there was another election. Arles wanted him as a candidate, but Montmartre still gave him their confidence. Clemenceau did not hesitate a moment. He chose the second division of his arrondissement.

There now began the era of Clemenceau's great campaigns and challenges. With a tenacity worthy of a better fate, he extended all his efforts towards the carrying out of the programme he had presented to his electors. And if he found himself up against a perpetual opposition, he at least succeeded in retaliating in a most startling way.

Clemenceau's programme was, before everything and above everything, the revision of the Constitution.



Photo Manuel

M. CLEMENCEAU AT THE AGE OF FORTY

“ When we began our campaign of revision,” he said in a speech to the House on March 6th, 1883, “ there were not eighty of us, there were only a few scattered individuals who foresaw the future. And the country gave us their confidence and there are here to-day by the will of the country more than 300 revisionist republicans.”

And further on he proceeds with the same calm logic :

“ It is the great question of the organisation of democracy that has been before us since the Revolution. To-day it is before us in the form of the revision of the Constitution, because, since 1871, since the day when the Republic was actually established, the question of the Republican Constitution has never been tackled ; because, to tell the truth, we have no Constitution ; because we are living under the truce of Versailles as the National Assembly lived long under the truce of

Bordeaux ; because we are living under a treaty concluded between republicans and monarchists in which each party strove to deceive the other and in which no one ever troubled to think what form of constitution or what institutions would be really suitable for the French nation and for the Republic."

The speech was addressed to Ferry, and Ferry was weak enough to reply to Clemenceau with a request for rest for the country.

"There is no rest for free peoples," the Montmartre deputy called from his bench. "Rest is a monarchist idea. A people, like every living organism, knows no rest."

From that time forward he directed his campaign against Ferry. For eighteen months he attacked him as if with a battering ram, breaking down his defences one by one and completely overwhelming him. Everything was grist that came to his mill: the question of the magistracy,

the Constitution, the syndicates, Tonkin, the mines, the ballot. On March 30th, 1885, Clemenceau won his game : Ferry's Cabinet resigned.

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But other elections came along. In the first instance Clemenceau failed to gain an absolute majority in the Seine, the Puy-de-Dome, and the Var. A second vote took place. The Seine department gave him 284,844 votes. But the Var elected him as well, and Clemenceau chose to represent them.

Brisson became the head of the Cabinet, but what did it matter who it was so long as he denounced the ideas of his predecessor ?

Clemenceau was frankly hostile to a policy of colonial conquest. He thought that the internal situation of France did not permit of the country indulging in such adventures. He returned to the charge against Brisson when he demanded a new vote of credit for Tonkin. The

House agreed with him and Brisson's Cabinet was obliged to resign.

On October 24th, Clemenceau was summoned to the Elysée, and Grévy charged him to form a new ministry. In twenty-four hours it was formed, but it did not last. It was a bad time for ministries ! After Clemenceau, Freycinet was the next to fall, but it was again Clemenceau who threw him out. Then came Goblet, then Rouvier, then Tirard, and it was always Clemenceau that was the author of their fall.

Once when he was asked how many defeated ministries he had on his conscience, he answered :

“ I have only thrown out one ministry, for it's always the same one.”

Clemenceau was within an ace of being elected President of the Chamber. When, after the fall of Boulanger's ministry, Floquet had undertaken to form a cabinet, the president's chair was vacant. Clemenceau was the candidate of the extreme Left against Méline, the Oppor-

tunist candidate. They both obtained 168 votes, and Clemenceau had to retire in favour of his opponent's age.

Before long he had to drink of the cup of bitterness. An implacable enemy had risen against him in the House. It was Déroulède, who was nevertheless an honest man and a great patriot.

He had been misled by false reports and accused Clemenceau of underhand dealings.

The meeting which took place on December 20th, 1892, is still famous. A duel was inevitable. Clemenceau had chosen Thomson and Ménard-Dorian to represent him. Déroulède had sent Barrès and Dumonteil. The encounter took place at Saint-Ouen on December 22nd. Six shots were exchanged without result.

It was a very narrow escape for Déroulède,¹ for Clemenceau was a first-class shot, and the day before the encounter had lodged nineteen out of twenty bullets

¹ See the present writer's *Paul Déroulède*, 1846-1914.

in the dummy at the Gastinne-Renette shooting range.

But the elections were at hand, and Clemenceau, who had been completely absolved of the calumnies spread about him and had kept his honour as a patriot intact, nevertheless fell a victim when he came before his electors to the campaign that had been conducted against him in the House.

He was not re-elected. But he was not the man to be dejected. If for ten years he did not appear on the political stage, that did not prevent his being very active behind the scenes.

Besides, had he not still journalism and book-writing to console him? To that he devoted himself body and soul—as was the case with everything he undertook—till the Var in 1902 gave him a seat in the Senate.

His political career began once more, but it was less vehement; it was touched with that kind of hesitation so often affected by members of the Senate.

But suddenly things became more lively. On March 14th, 1906, Sarrien, who had been asked by M. Fallières to form a Cabinet, offered the post of Minister of the Interior to Clemenceau, who proclaimed himself "the first *flic* of France." On October 25th of the same year he became President of the Council, and remained in power till March 22nd, 1909. His was one of the longest ministries of the Third Republic.

Back in the Senate again, Clemenceau was elected by his colleagues President of the Army Commission and the Commission on Foreign Affairs.

There the war found him.

From there he embarked on the prodigious career which in his own history effaces all the previous paths he trod and in the history of France far outshines the achievements of the greatest statesmen.

THE JOURNALIST

CHAPTER IV

THE JOURNALIST

BEGINNINGS—PRESS WARFARE

WHEN in his youth Clemenceau used to indulge in repeated demonstrations against the Empire and denounce its tyrannical rule with a fine fire, he lacked a platform where he could give forth his ideas at will. He turned to the army of small newspapers without great influence and without many readers, which in the last six years of the Empire appeared, disappeared, re-appeared, and were constantly and closely supervised by the police.

They were the *Travail*, the *Matin*, the *Candide*, the *Jeune France*, the *Libre Pensée*, the *Morale Indépendante* and a host of others, printed, cyclostyled, or laboriously written by hand.

As a matter of fact Clemenceau's *début* in these small papers was rather of a literary than a political kind. He contributed only to two of them, the *Travail* and the *Matin*, which both appeared in 1862. The *Travail* was founded by Germain Casse, a law student, André Rousselle, a lawyer, Gustave Tredon, known as Karl Morel, a medical student, and Joseph Aubry, a printer.

Clemenceau's most sensational article in this little weekly paper was a vigorous attack on Edmond About. The story is worth telling, for it shows the youth of the Latin Quarter in action and Clemenceau playing a part.

On January 2nd, 1862, a performance of *Gaëtana*, a drama in five acts by About, was given at the Odéon. As About was very much in favour at Court, the republican youth of Paris instituted a campaign against the work—surely an arbitrary enough reason!

It was a memorable scene at the Odéon, and a description of it was written

after the performance for the *Courrier du Dimanche* by Edmond Cottinet. The students filling the parterre, he says, started to hiss and groan at the beginning of the very first scene of the very first act, thus protesting in the most evident fashion against the personality of the author and refusing to listen to his play.

But the row at the Odéon was not enough for the students. What a splendid opportunity to annoy the police, who were representatives of the established order ! The manifestors formed a procession to go and make a demonstration under About's windows in the Passage Saulnier. The Pont Neuf was blocked by the police ? They would go by the Concorde ! There were hustling crowds at every street corner ? What did it matter if they reached their goal ! The procession arrived at the Passage Saulnier. There were cries, songs, and oaths. The whole staff of the little opposition papers was there, the whole vehement band of future doctors, lawyers, and teachers.

At last things quieted down and Clemenceau—he was among them—and the others dispersed. It was a splendid day and for ever memorable—at least, so one must believe, for it was one of the manifestors who told me the story, vivid and detailed, fifty-eight years after !

There was one person, however, who was not so satisfied. It was the poor molested author. He took his trusty pen and wrote a letter to the *Napoléonien*, a small Champagne newspaper, which the *Courrier du Dimanche* took a malicious pleasure in reproducing. It began :

“ MONSIEUR ET CHER CONFRÈRE,

“ Ever since the day when the arch-rascals of Paris robbed me at the Odéon of the fruit of seven or eight months' toil, I have been carefully studying in the newspapers the effect that this brutal robbery may have had in the provinces. . . . ”

At last Clemenceau had some one to

get his teeth—or his claws—into ! He was delighted. It was too good an opportunity to lose, and there appeared from his pen in the *Travail* the following paragraph, which already shows signs of the writer of polemic :

“ We consider it a point of honour to number ourselves among the rascals mentioned by M. About in his unspeakable letter. We beg to shower on its author all the contempt it rouses in us, a contempt which will certainly be shared by the young men of the Schools. M. About is merely a funny presumptuous fellow in a rage. Let us warn him what he has done—he has insulted us in Champagne without warning us beforehand. The public will appreciate his conduct and ours.”

So that the public might appreciate their conduct still better, the young journalists organised their famous February 24th manifestation on the Place de la Bastille.

We have already seen what that cost Clemenceau.

While he was languishing under the shadow of the Mazas prison walls, the *Travail* ceased to appear.

Clemenceau then offered his budding talent to the *Matin*, another paper with the same aspirations as the *Travail*. The *Matin* had its offices at the house of one of its editors, 58 Rue des Ecoles, and its first number appeared on June 20th, 1862. It was fed by prose and verse contributions from Pierre Denis, Andrieux, Adrien Desprez, and Maret—not the Henry Maret who was at that time contributing delicate little sketches to the *Illustration*. In the opening number Clemenceau wrote a friendly criticism of *Les Bleus et les Blancs*, just published by Etienne Arago, his father's old friend. That was, as a matter of fact, the only article he produced for that paper. Did he not see eye to eye with his colleagues, or did he think that small journalism would not lead him to the realisation

of his ambitious plans of authorship? Whatever was the reason, he "chucked" the newspapers of the Latin Quarter, and the *Candide*, the *Jeune France*, the *Libre Pensée*, the *Morale Indépendante* to which Vermorel, Louise Michel, Métra, Emile Gebhart, Clémence Royer, Flourens, Asseline, Eudes and many more writers of note contributed, never saw him in their editorial sancta.

He did not, however, give up the good fight against the tyrannical institutions he had so often denounced in his youthful ardour. He remained on excellent terms with his friends. The cause was a good one, and it was not the Emperor's minions that frightened him off. But he was a hard-headed politician and was not content with vague Utopias. An excellent state of mind for one who would pursue his own old way without jolt or jar!

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The following years marked a halt in the journalist's career. It was a time of

study and of serious examinations successfully crowning his work.

Then there was the great expedition to England and America, when the young man had opportunities of developing his talents still further. He was now twenty-four years of age. Through the intervention of friends in Paris, he was allowed to send copy to the *Temps*. Adrien Hébrard, who knew how to choose his correspondents, estimated the young doctor's articles at their proper value, and entrusted him with a column of "Letters from the United States." These letters, like those sent from Germany by an anonymous colleague, were edited by the sub-editor. Georges Clemenceau was not famous enough yet to have the right of signing his name in a serious newspaper by the side of the proprietor, A. Nefftzer, Jules Ferry, Ulysse Ladet, Charles Dollfus, or even Louis Blanc, who was English correspondent, or A. Erdan, the Italian correspondent.

It was under these conditions that he

announced General Grant's election on November 22nd, 1868, with the following comment :

“ However it may be, it is a decisive and brilliant victory for the republicans. It is a sure testimony that reaction will not prevail, and that the blacks will not be left to the mercy of their old masters. Of these slaves, America means to make, and will make, men, free men, citizens.”

It is interesting to compare with this paragraph, where the expression “ free men ”—a word full of omen !—appears for the first time from the writer's pen, these lines from a speech made by him as President of the Council on June 27th, 1918, at the Front to the American Tommies who took Belleau Wood :

“ I have for a long time been an admirer of the institutions of the United States, which I know well. I was in your country during the last days of the Civil

War and in Richmond five minutes before General Grant took that town. In that war the Americans showed wonderful qualities and a wonderful fighting spirit, and to-day again your troops are showing the same spirit and the same courage. . . ”

So at half a century's distance Clemenceau establishes a point of history and uses the same, or very nearly the same, expressions as before to pay a just tribute to the great American Republic.

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Another pause, this time a long one, while Clemenceau was carried into the vortex of political life—that life where he could express his ideas and defend them, with what enthusiasm, with what ardour, with what faith, we know, on the public platform of the Hôtel de Ville and of Parliament. We may rest assured he made good use of his opportunities.

But his pen could not lie idle and inert on his desk for ever, and in 1880 Clemenceau was at it again, with nervous

hand and alert brain, scratching away, slashing at people, but always in a concise and lucid style, justifying the motto *Scripta manent*. He founded a newspaper with—as one would expect from Clemenceau—a fine-sounding title. He was not long in finding it : “ *La Justice*.” The first number came out on January 15th, 1880. Gustave Geffroy, always a faithful friend, was the sub-editor. Camille Pelletan *père*, Alexandre Millerand, Léon Millot, Jules Roche, and Gerville-Réache were its first contributors, and formed a *pléiade* where all the talents were represented. Most suitable names to conduct an essentially democratic programme !

Each day, without pause, without slackness, Clemenceau contributed his article. At thirty-nine he was in his prime. But double the age if you feel so inclined, and is he not still, will he not always be, in the prime of life ?

In this *Justice* there is more than one passage worthy of our best classics ; there are pages without number of fine criticism,

deep learning, and witty polemic. Clemenceau touches on all subjects, but he treats them with a sureness and mastery worthy of the best journalists. A drama of Ibsen's, "which in the greatness of its conception, in its strongly constructed action, in the relief of its characters is truly Shakespearean"; the Congress on Alcohol, "where it is simply a question of teaching dreamers to live a noble dream instead of degrading themselves and killing themselves for base visions of folly"; the Musée du Louvre, "where poor humbled, timid wretches huddled round the hot air ventilator gaze in weary stupor at the canvases chance has hung before them"; the Academy; bull fights; Democracy.—these are some of the many subjects on which he lavishes his inexhaustible verve, and from which he draws a moral, sometimes disconcerting, but always human.

Justice survived till November 1st, 1897, with the name of its founder on the first page. The day before, he had

contributed his last article. He then definitely left the paper.

Clemenceau then went over to the *Aurore*, which Ernest Vaughan had founded with the support of a remarkable *élite* of writers, among whom were Jean Psichari, Anatole France, and Francis de Pressensé. He published numerous articles in that paper alternating with those of Paul Brulat, Laurent Tailhade, Frantz Jourdain, Bernard Lazare, Georges Lecomte, Urbain Gohier, Lucien Descaves and others. But the Dreyfus Affair arose to set people at variance and widen the breach between them. Georges Clemenceau took an impassioned interest in it and ceased to contribute to Vaughan's paper.

To tell the truth, he wanted a paper of his very own. There was nothing for it but to found one.

On Sunday, January 27th, 1901, he presented to the public *Le Bloc*, a weekly paper printed in two columns, in-8vo, costing 50 centimes. Its offices were at 87 Rue Cardinet.

But do not imagine imposing waiting-rooms, ringing telephones, and fevered editorial offices. Clemenceau, the founder of the *Bloc*, managed it and edited it with no other help than that of his devoted secretary. Articles, items of news, echoes, criticisms were all from his pen. And the twelve pages were well filled, and democracy only needed to bide its time !

The *Bloc* lived a whole year in high favour. One fine morning the reader on opening his paper found in it, as a kind of P.P.C., these final and farewell words, dated March 15th, 1902 :

“ The inconvenience of a paper like the *Bloc* is that the sole editor has no right to absent himself or to be ill, or even lazy, a single day.

“ Having agreed to become a candidate for the Var at the coming election I shall be obliged to leave Paris in a few days, and I cannot think of editing my paper while I am on the move. I am therefore

obliged to suspend the publication of the *Bloc* temporarily. As it is impossible for me to do otherwise, I beg my readers to forgive me. We shall meet again at an early date."

Readers and editor never met again, at least in connection with the *Bloc*. Clemenceau's election to the Senate put an end for ever to the weekly paper.

A year passed. Was the senator going to abandon the press?

No need for uneasiness on that score. On June 1st there appeared in the *Aurore* this short paragraph: "M. Georges Clemenceau is taking over from tomorrow, June 2nd, the chief editorship of the *Aurore*." His first article appeared immediately. But his true "declaration" was not printed till the following day: "If I should sometimes chance to dare to tell ministers the truth, however disagreeable it may be, it is because I place in the first rank the claims of the Ideal . . ." And so that

he might not get out of his old habits he immediately started on a campaign against the newspapers which in his eyes represented reaction.

Clemenceau, however, once more fully occupied with his political duties, had to abandon *L'Aurore*. As senator, minister, and President of the Council he had no longer leisure to devote himself to his daily polemic. He reserved himself. He knew that the day would soon come when he would see a newspaper of his very own spring into life.

On his return from South America, where he made a long tour for purposes of study, he carried out his plan. The newspaper this time was to be a daily one, and Clemenceau set to work quickly. He rented a flat in Rue Taitbout, took on the chief editorship himself, appointed A. Bernier as manager and François Albert as sub-editor. The front page was ready, but what about a title? Is it so very troublesome to find a title, a good title with no ambiguity, short, alive,

democratic? Certainly not. The first number that issued all fresh from the printers on Monday, May 5th, 1913, was entitled: "*L'Homme Libre*" ("*The Free Man*"). What promises there were in that name and how well they were kept! In presenting *L'Homme Libre* to the public, Universal Suffrage, which was the great question of the day, was the very subject for an introductory article:

"No one knows yet under what government the coming inquiry into the franchise will take place. France demands first of all that there should be definite decisions arrived at. There must be an end to secret understandings, whose aim is to deceive public opinion and hide the true nature of the parties. Every independent organ can render the very greatest services in this direction, as some have already so courageously done.

"Whatever our mode of parliamentary voting is to be there is no need more press-

ing than a clear delimitation of parties to avoid the surprise of cases where candidates do not scruple to proclaim themselves in favour of parliamentary programmes against which they later on, more or less indirectly, direct their parliamentary activities. A new triumph of ambiguity would be the worst disaster for the republicans. Our first duty is to denounce coalitions roundly, as being a most cruel outrage against the clear-thinking mind of the French democracy.

“It is improbable that the Proportionalist Coalition will be dissolved without making a last attempt. Before universal suffrage we shall be able to defend the rights of universal suffrage. It will be enough for us to oppose sound common-sense to the follies of our adversaries. Nothing will make us yield in our work of republican reconstitution.

“If you desire to co-operate with us in this work of extreme urgency, your good will can easily be strengthened by an effort of propaganda ; we shall never

succeed except through our power of penetration into the mass of electors whose rights we desire above all to safeguard."

But Clemenceau, in *L'Homme Libre*, did not stop at, did not linger too long over, considerations of home politics and campaigns against existing institutions. It was in 1913, let us not forget, that he started his newspaper. And already to his informed mind, profound observer that he was, the situation of France, "which demands something more than improvisations of empiricism in a confusion of irresponsibilities," was far from reassuring. He felt very keenly that France was passing through "a difficult hour" and he suggested means of help:

"First of all, we must live. It is therefore inconceivable that the French people, to whom any idea of provocation is completely foreign, should hesitate to make in her own defence analogous, if not equal, sacrifices to those so easily

obtained in our neighbouring empire by a policy which rouses only too justly in this country and elsewhere fears of aggression.

“The nation has the right to demand in return that science, which has hitherto been so often at fault, should be able to extract the maximum of efficiency from their virile efforts. The obligation to provide for the necessities of the armed peace which Germany forces upon us entails an increase of effectives, not for the everyday routine which has led us so magnificently to disaster, but for a methodical organisation of military training and preparation, in view of a higher use. I shall have to speak of this again.”

And indeed, not a single week passed without Clemenceau's speaking of it again. With unwearied energy he returned to the great problems raised in his mind by a possible war, a probable war, a war in the near future.

How does he set about gaining his ends, interesting the reader and attracting him?

I have before me a page of his handwriting, vigorous and decided, with hardly an erasure, in which he confesses his ambition. It is the whole history of *L'Homme Libre*, it is the whole history of the *Bloc*, it is the whole history of his articles, his stories, his books :

“ To force attention without resorting to base means, to hold it without losing one's scrupulous regard for the truth, to formulate opinions and suggest others, to attempt to get hold of an unknown passer-by and lead him to a definite goal, to put him straight for a single fleeting day, and if possible for more, to stir up thoughts which go out and beyond the present event, and may some day engender actions—all that, be the end success or defeat, is a bold ambition.”

In the meantime in *L'Homme Libre*

the note was getting louder. All the first half of 1914 the editor was proclaiming the imminent peril. Not an article but is worthy of mention. *Pour la Défense nationale, Vouloir ou mourir, Pour être, Choses de France, Triompher ou périr* are fragments imbued with the purest patriotism and better still—yes, better still, for true patriotism is the desire for a strong country—permeated through and through with a rigorous logic and a sound reasoning.

The hour of grave resolutions was at hand. A state of war was proclaimed. And if at the Front only the guns spoke, those who spoke at home were those who desired to react against a policy whose imperfections seemed to them numerous. Yet no, they did not speak. The censor was on the watch, and *L'Homme Libre* became more and more every day the most scrupulously blue-pencilled of papers. On August 28th, Clemenceau's own article was completely suppressed.

"The censor used," so he wrote

the following day under the heading "*Saboté!*" "to confine himself to the suppression of passages of an article. Now he is content with nothing less than the complete article to satisfy his hatred of journalism. . . ."

A month later, because it had ignored certain deletions required by the censor, *L'Homme Libre* was suspended.

"I bow," said Clemenceau, "but tomorrow I will publish another paper." The terrible man got the better of all opposition, and on September 30th there appeared *L'Homme Enchaîné* (*The Bondman*). Of all the *mots* he made in his long career, this one was incontestably the most sarcastic and the most stinging.

Bondman—yes, like all the press, like all those who had the courage to expose our wounds the better to heal them.

At last one fine day—it *was* a fine day!—*L'Homme Enchaîné* recovered its old title and its old freedom to utter its opinions. But Clemenceau had left it.

It was on November 16th, 1917.

A happy date for the liberty of French thought.

A happy date for the liberty of the world.

THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER V

THE AUTHOR

HIS WORK—HIS IDEAS—HIS PLAYS

WHAT was there for Clemenceau to do during the ten years that separated his exit from the Lower House and his entry to the Senate ?

His long and profound studies at Nantes, in the Latin Quarter, and in America, which had given him a fund of knowledge, that constant need of observation and meditation which had made him a thinker and a philosopher, his mind with its close logical reasoning and delicate imagination which had revealed him as no mean orator in the House, naturally opened up a path for him which he was to penetrate deeply.

Clemenceau as author ! What an

outlet for his active will, what a vast field for his learning, what a horizon for his critical temperament !

Add to that a sharp pen, a wit as sarcastic as it was sensitive, and the man stands before us as a writer of great and original talent.

We must of course recognise that Clemenceau was no novice. In his youth he had written a thesis which was republished many years after he had passed his degree, with a preface by Dr. Robin, his University professor. Then in the United States in 1868, when he was sending periodic articles to the *Temps*, he translated Stuart Mill's book on *Auguste Comte and Positivism*. This work was printed in Paris by Germer Baillière and the edition, which was successful, is almost unobtainable to-day. On its title page it bears the name "Docteur G. Clemenceau," a title which the author abandoned for ever in his future works. He practised so very little—never at all in America and only some

months in France in his dispensary at Montmartre after the events of the Commune.

Clemenceau's literary work did not begin again till very much later ; we have seen that political reverses were the reason. The year 1895 marks a fertile period when the writer reveals himself and imposes his personality more and more each day.

In that year he picked out the best articles that had appeared in *Justice*, the *Journal*, the *Echo de Paris* and the *Dépêche de Toulouse* and published them together in one volume under the title *La Mêlée Sociale*. The work was accompanied by a remarkable preface which is quite the finest confession of faith one could read and which placed the author at once in the front rank of contemporary authors. An exquisite sensitiveness is exhaled from this theme where the great Darwinian conflict hovering over the world is described by a master hand.

“ So long as living humanity is subservient to the law of struggle,” writes Clemenceau, “she will not allow herself to be robbed of her power of dreaming, which is the source of hope and the origin of force and action. Let us then dream freely, and on the solid foundation of what we know or think we know, let us boldly build the miraculous edifice of our hope and our desire.”

This other passage, too, from which we gather his doubt of an absolute nothingness, should be recalled :

“ Well, even if the whole man is swallowed up for ever in the darkness of earth, if every sensation, every thought, every conscious faculty is for ever blotted out, if the biological laws have irrevocably succumbed to the eternal mechanical law, if in infinite space all the stars stand extinguished and immobile in stupid equilibrium, awaiting nothing, not even chance, if the universe is dead, yet one thing at least cannot be suppressed : it

is that we have lived, it is that we have suffered, it is that we have desired, it is that we have loved. If, by an impossibility, eternity has said its first and last word about us, if we are the great miracle that never had been and never will be again, at least we shall have been that miracle of consciousness and will, sprung from the obscure earthly matter to oppose for one instant of changing life the dull immutability of the eternal absolute."

The following year *Le Grand Pan* appeared.

The preface—which Clemenceau never asks any one else to write—is of considerable philosophic and social value. As an epigraph, a saying of Renan's : "Life is giving one's flower and then one's fruit : what more ? "

Pan, the unconquered spirit, is the whole world, the omnipotent, infinite force, with eternally changing effects, the perceptible mode of things by which the universe acts on us and in us.

With delicate and profound knowledge and an extraordinary acquaintance with ancient texts, the author in his preface—or is it not rather a magnificent ode than a preface?—retraces the sublime mythology of the great legend. All the philosophy of the notes that compose the book, taken as they are from the chance happenings of the day, originates in this universal Pan, “from whom evolution has not separated us except to make him, through us, greater and better.”

One must act. For Clemenceau action is the prime mover, action is the means, action is the end. “What more?” says Renan. And the author of *Le Grand Pan* concludes: “There is really nothing more, except to desire, except to make life greater.” And for those who turn the pages of the book there is a mass of descriptions, items of news, social studies abounding in recollections, swarming with anecdotes and giving free course to sound criticisms and unexpected reflections.

Le Grand Pan was crowned with success.

After this mixture of Hellenism and social philosophy, Clemenceau wrote in 1898 *Les Plus Forts*, a novel of present-day life, in which he scathingly denounces the hypocritical domination of fortune's favourites, of *les plus forts*, the strong, over the weak.

But the usually charming story-teller, subtle observer, and witty critic seems to be a little heavy in this work. For Clemenceau is not a novel writer. He lacks the character for it, he lacks the long groping apprenticeship, above all it is not his trade. He would most assuredly confess himself that he is not a novelist if one were tempted to consider him as such.

This novel, by that same token, was his only attempt in that direction, and the same year—as if to blot out the recollection of its imperfections—he published in an *édition de luxe*, illustrated by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, a volume entitled *Au pied du Mont Sinai*, in which one

finds impressions of Galicia, "where the most miserable inhabitants have the gift of willing and doing."

Then there appeared *L'Iniquité* and *Vers la Réparation*, both published in 1899.

These two works—which cannot be separated—are of very great interest to any one desirous of studying the position Clemenceau took up in the Dreyfus case. They are a collection of all his articles on the subject. He was *against* and he was *for*. It is to his honour that he freed himself from all social, political, and religious considerations and followed only the path prescribed by his conscience.

The preface of *L'Iniquité* is a noble and sincere confession; it is so hard for a politician or a writer to say the *mea culpa* for his mistakes and errors!

"The present book is a daily note of the evolution of a mind from injustice to reparation. I have not the merit of having felt the iniquity of the case from

the first day. I believed in the culpability of Dreyfus and I said so in cruel terms."

He had, as a matter of fact, written in *Justice*, among other criticisms :

" Alfred Dreyfus is a traitor, and I would not insult any soldier by classing him along with that poor wretch."

Then he veered round. He saw new light on the subject, formed a new opinion of the case, and did not hesitate to engage on a campaign of correction. He pursued his intrepid undertaking without rest, reviewing documents and establishing facts with an impartial clearness.

Au fil des jours, which appeared in 1900, and *La Honte*, 1903, are also collections of articles full of memories and abounding in energy. In 1903 also he published another book : *Aux Embuscades de la Vie*, a collection of stories overflowing with life, of philosophic sketches, and of delicately coloured and

sensitive descriptions, grouped according to their moral—for Clemenceau is at bottom a great moralist—into three parts : faith, the established order, love.

But his life in the Senate made him forget books, or rather left him no leisure to write them, and it was not till long after that he marked himself out again as an author with a lively description of a journey he had just made in South America. These *Notes de Voyage* in the Argentine, Uruguay, and Brazil are rich in reviews on the resources and institutions of these distant countries.

The following is a short extract from the foreword, in which the author explains his point of view to the reader :

“ I am a man of my own time and my own country, and my time and my country have given me, at the end of an already long career, opinions from which there will proceed, as is fitting, judgments, which I shall submit to the public in all impartiality. There is no-

thing farther from my thoughts than to share the current prejudices of Paris on that strange variety of human creatures that are foolish enough to inhabit territories situated outside Villiers-sur-Marne or Saint-Cloud. . . . Three months' travel is not long enough to gather the elements of definite formulæ on the future of these vast territories where enterprises in civilisation are being carried out, by which the political and social balance of the planet—still completely European—will be fatally upset. It is a big enough task simply to tell what one has seen, for there is an art in seeing as well as telling. I can scarcely claim to have succeeded perfectly, but I think I may hope that a series of remarks written down in all sincerity will bear witness to the goodwill of my observation and will not be absolutely useless to the reader."

About the same date our tireless author collected the best articles from *L'Homme*

Libre between May 5th and July 13th, 1913, in a volume entitled *Dans les Champs du Pouvoir*,¹ a slashing criticism of "those numerous personages whom the daily paper seeks out in all their nooks and corners."

Let us hear what he says about them :

" You must know that they are simply the power which decides on every matter, for it is from their atavistic prejudices, from their superficial information, from their ignorant narrow-mindedness, and from their lack of soul, that there is formed *public opinion*, that sovereign mistress of the assembly of men, that voice of God on earth, before which the principal function of the so-called ' governing classes ' is to tremble."

The articles in *L'Homme Libre*—and later in *L'Homme Enchaîné*—are too well written to fall into oblivion. They are too good a reflection " of the feelings

¹ Published in one vol. in-16, Payot, Paris.

and thoughts that can be aroused in a French patriot by the train of bloody encounters in which the right, the historic honour, and the very life of the country are irreparably engaged," and Clemenceau decided to republish wide extracts from a great part of those written during the war.

" *La France devant l'Allemagne*,¹ which appeared in 1916, is a brief account of a human conflict so comprehensive that henceforth the title *France versus Germany* will always connote the revolt of Europe and of civilisation—the revolt of Europe, mother of all the deepest benefits of life, against the achievement of a technicity of savagery. The greatest battle of humanity, the greatest battle by the number of its fighting men, by the terrible power of their arms, by the refinement of atrocities and devastation indulged in by a *kultur* of barbarism proclaiming its contempt of the rights of

¹ Published in one vol. in-8vo, Payot, Paris.

individuals and of nations, the greatest battle by reason of its high stake : the exaltation or the degradation of the human species—is that not the real meaning of *La France devant l'Allemagne*, that is to say, at the two poles of history, the confronting of the two nations representative of good and evil ? ”

The preceding lines are Clemenceau's own. Once more, who better fitted than the author to introduce his own work ?

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One would have reason to be astonished if a remarkable stylist, an attentive observer, and a philosopher like Clemenceau had never attempted to write for the theatre.

He did do so and a play was accepted by Gémier called *Le Voile du Bonheur* (*The Veil of Happiness*), a comedy in one act, and produced at the Théâtre de la Renaissance. It was admirably acted by Madame Andrée Mégard and by Gémier, and exquisite incidental music

was written for it by M. Gabriel Fauré. But the philosophic idea underlying the play was not relished and the critics insisted on the imperfections of the budding dramatist.

And yet it was a tempting subject. The hero is the blind mandarin Tchang the First. He has a happy life because he believes in the respect of his son, the love of his wife, and the friendship of every one. The veil is torn and Tchang suddenly sees: his son ridicules him, his friends lie to him, and his wife deceives him. With his recovered sight, happiness has fled. But Tchang is a philosopher and maims his sight again. He is but a man, and because he no longer sees anything of human miseries, he knows that he has become the equal of the gods under the shelter of the veil of happiness.

The play was withdrawn after a few performances. But it had a distant echo, for, at the beginning of October 1918, on the occasion of the national fête of the Chinese Republic, it was revived at

the Théâtre Antoine and played—in Chinese by Chinamen.

Clemenceau, we may add, has more than one unpublished play in his files. But he is in no hurry to produce them.

His literary work is that of a great writer. The Académie Française, sometimes so tardy in offering their highest honour to those most worthy of it, desired that Georges Clemenceau should in his turn take his place in that learned assembly.

On November 22nd, 1918, he was unanimously offered the seat of the late Emile Faguet. The day the French entered Strasburg was indeed well chosen for such a ceremony.

Clemenceau has now more than one title to Immortality.

THE GREAT CITIZEN

CHAPTER VI

THE GREAT CITIZEN

BEFORE VICTORY—IN VICTORY

I KNOW no finer life, none greater, none more prodigious, none more equal to that of the heroes at the Front with its traditional bravery, its savage determination and its sublime endurance and tenacity, than that of Georges Clemenceau, since the day when in anguish and peril he took in hand the destinies of his country.

France had to stand fast: stand fast before the Russian adventure, stand fast before the flood that surged over the lands of France, stand fast before internal weakness, stand fast till America's super-human effort began to be felt, stand fast before the world.

There was a political crisis, and a political crisis is always a serious thing in a country that has need of all her energies ten times over. France, mutilated but glorious, was waiting for a man of character and of action who could and who would undertake her responsibilities and co-ordinate the generous efforts of each one for the good of all.

The Cabinet had resigned.

For several days, in view of the imminence of the crisis, France had set her hopes on Clemenceau, the man whose genuine patriotism, whose foresight, whose superabundant activity, whose moral force and physical vigour, in spite of age, were traditional. He alone was capable of realising the sacred union of France as it had been realised on the great day of mobilisation. He alone was capable of drawing up a great programme and of carrying it out.

Clemenceau consented to form a new Cabinet.

The speech he made in Parliament on

November 20th, 1917, is a page to be preserved for the History of France. In re-reading it now after victory, we can judge what weighty influence the lofty thoughts revealed in it exerted on the moral forces of the country. They can be summed up in a phrase: To govern in order to carry on the war with redoubled effort, so as to give the best return for all the energies expended.

It is the most stirring, the most noble appeal there has ever been. Will schoolmasters teach it to the future generations it will have saved?

“ These Frenchmen whom we were forced to cast into the battle have rights over us. They want not a single one of our thoughts to be turned from them, not a single one of our actions to be forgetful of them. We owe them everything, without any reserve. Everything for France bleeding in her glory, everything for the apotheosis of Right triumphant.

“ We have but one duty, and a simple one : to stand by the soldier, to live, to suffer, to fight with him. We must give up everything which does not belong to the Motherland. The hour has come for us to be French and French alone, and have the courage to tell ourselves that that is enough.

“ Now is the time for the rights of the Front and the duties of home to be blended together in one whole ; now is the time for every zone to be a fighting zone. If there are still men with the old seeds of hatred in their hearts, let us cast them out.

“ All the civilised nations are engaged in the same battle against the modern forces of ancient barbarism. Together with all our splendid allies, we are the immovable rock of a barrier that will not be broken. On the allied Front, at every moment and in every place there is nothing but fraternal solidarity, the most sure foundation of the world to come.

“ France, the country of ideals, has

suffered for all mankind. Firm in the hopes she has drawn from the purest springs of humanity, she is willing to suffer still for the defence of the soil of her great forbears in the hope of opening ever wider, to individuals as well as to nations, all the doors of life. The strength of the soul of France lies there. That is what moves our people to work as well as to war. The silent workers in the factory, deaf to evil suggestions, the old peasants bending over the fields, the strong women at work on the land, the children gravely lending their little help—they too are our soldiers. And in after life, when they look back on the great work accomplished, they too can say, like the soldiers in the trenches, ‘I did my bit.’ By them also we must stand and, casting aside our miserable squabbles for the good of the country, one day manage to love each other. Loving each other does not mean saying it, but proving it to each other. We are going to try to prove it. We ask you to help us. Could

there be a finer programme of government?

"... Some day from Paris to the humblest village in the land a storm of welcome will greet our victorious banners, wet with blood and with tears, torn by shells, a glorious token of our great dead. On that day, the grandest in the history of our country, after so many of a different kind, it is in our power to prove it. Gentlemen, for resolutions there will be no going back on we demand the seal of your will and determination."

Clemenceau's whole policy of war is admirably summed up in his speeches in Parliament. They are few. For the President of the Council only actions are of importance. Words explain them, nothing more.

He was determined that even the censorship, from which he had endured so much himself, should not be allowed to intervene in political matters. What did it matter if he was blamed by the mal-

contents? He gave writers back the liberties from the loss of which he had suffered so much in the past. On one occasion when the censor suppressed an article containing uncomplimentary remarks about the President of the Council, Clemenceau sent a note to the Press in which we find all his old irony, and which justifies his past complaints of journalistic days :

“ As the right of abusing the members of the Government must be made safe from all attack, disciplinary measures have immediately been taken against the official who ignored the ministerial instructions on this subject.”

Clemenceau went into power to wage war, and his great strength lay in the fact that he never let himself be side-tracked, and that he waged war with the entire confidence of his country.

And yet he wanted peace, and knew that it would be criminal to have any

other thought. After four months of government in which he accomplished the most useful reforms, in which he gave himself without stint, in which he strove always to put the right man in the right place in spite of friendships, oppositions, and cliques, he appeared before Parliament and flung an answer to his challengers :

“ It is not by bleating for Peace that Prussian militarism will be silenced.

“ My watchword is the same everywhere. Home politics ? I wage war ! Foreign politics ? I wage war ! I always wage war !

“ I do my best to maintain the confidence of our Allies. Russia betrays us ? —I continue to wage war ! Our unfortunate ally Rumania is obliged to capitulate ? I continue to wage war, and I will continue till the very last quarter of an hour, because the last quarter of an hour will be ours.”

And he carried the Chamber with him.

How then did this minister who was going to have the last quarter of an hour wage war? He did it largely at the Front, always alert and always scornful of danger, for he was very fond of his soldiers and could not keep his thoughts away from them, "buried day and night in muddy rabbit holes, shivering and benumbed, but their hearts armed with an ardent valour which makes them face cold, hunger, and death with a smile."

Not a week passed but we learned from a discreet communiqué that he had been at the Front. Have we not often enough read this short paragraph hidden in the fullest column of the papers, modestly announcing: "The President of the Council returned to Paris yesterday from the Front"? Have you noticed that Clemenceau most often chooses Sunday for that kind of expedition? One might almost think that he was ashamed to rest and that he was afraid to lose the lessons of a single precious day!

He has been everywhere and visited all the sectors.

From the Somme and the Oise, where a terrible battle was raging, he returned home and declared : " The future must be viewed with calmness."

When the German advance was thundering on the outskirts of Reims he preached confidence.

" I have just left our soldiers," he explained to questioning deputies. " They have an absolute faith in their leaders and rush under fire singing. With such men and such leaders France cannot be beaten."

On July 17th the German offensive redoubled in violence. He remained with the troops several days at the Front till the French soldiers made their advance.

He saw the Americans in training, he saw them attack, and the British and the Belgians and the Italians, and all the Allies ; he saw the French in action " mustering to the call of the poetry of a higher life, responding to the almost

spiritual impulse that plunges them wholeheartedly into battle," and fighting for their great country, for their wives and for their children.

He saw Saint-Quentin and Cambrai, Saint-Mihiel, Laon, Soissons, Reims in flames, and all the towns of the North and all those of the East, and all the villages, and all the country districts.

He saw Mangin, Pétain, and Pershing at their headquarters ; he saw colonels in their dug-outs ; he saw—heedless of danger, unpardonably heedless of danger !—sentries at their posts.

One day he was out with General Cordonnier. In spite of warnings of prudence, Clemenceau wanted to see the front lines, the very front lines. When the imprudence he was committing and the danger he was running were pointed out to him he replied :

"I don't care a ——. I am old enough to be killed," and he walked on into the communication trench, gained the first line trenches, left his companions

behind him and jumped into a listening post only four yards away from an enemy post.

"Well, old boy," he said to the soldier on duty, "how goes it?"

"*Ta g*——," the other replied, and before he had time to recognise the Premier, had given him a resounding blow.

Would you believe that Clemenceau was so pleased and so happy at this mistake that he took the astounded soldier in both arms and kissed him?

"I who have so often fought for not a great deal, if I had been told that I should embrace a man for lifting his hand against me, I should certainly never have believed it," he declared, radiant, a few seconds later.

On certain occasions, although questions of foreign policy were not among the things that thrilled him—he is too impulsive to make a perfect diplomatist according to the principles of the old school—Clemenceau threw himself into

the game of international polemic. Need we say that he played it with great brilliance ?

Count Czernin, the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his moral offensive of April 1918 against the Allies, which is as famous as the other offensive on the Front, maintained that Clemenceau had approached him with a view to entering into peace negotiations.

Immediately there appeared an official note in the French Press. I am ready to bet that the manuscript could be found in one of the President of the Council's drawers in his own writing. It is a statement that will not be forgotten so soon among the chancelleries of Europe :

“ The President of the Council departed at an early hour this morning for the Front. It was not until he was actually on the way that he heard of the statements of the Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs. On reading the above

telegram, M. Clemenceau simply replied :
' Count Czernin is lying.' "

This communiqué was followed, ten days later, by another, the " manner " of which was quite equal to the first. " There are some rotten consciences (*des consciences pourries*)," was all Clemenceau said.

Needless to remark, Count Czernin did not have the last word and he had to resign.

In the meantime the German military offensive was proceeding on the Front and the allied armies had had to yield much ground. These were dark days for any but the very stout-hearted. It was a hard contest, but for that very reason it had to be won.

One man, more than any others, had faith. He knew our losses, he knew our reverses. But he knew also that " victory "—so says Foch—" always goes to those who deserve it by the greatest force of will and intelligence." Need we say that that man was Clemenceau ?



Photo "Illustration"

M. CLEMENCEAU AT THE VERSAILLES CONFERENCE
(FEBRUARY 1918)

In the Chamber, where malcontents were beginning to get excited, he held his own. Confidence, still more confidence, is what he asks for :

“ All these heroes at the Front can but die. But you, by your firm and resolute attitude, can give them what they deserve : Victory ! You have before you,” he goes on, “ a Government which, as they told you right from the beginning, will never accept a peace of humiliation. You know what you are doing. Put us out of office or keep us. It is for you to decide. But as long as we are here, the country will be defended to the very utmost, and no strength will be spared to obtain success.

“ I repeat : we will not yield to the enemy. That is the watchword of the Government. We will never give in.

“ I emphasise once more that victory depends on us, on condition that the civil powers are equal to their duty.

“ Dismiss me if you think that I have

been a bad servant. If not, give me something more than incoherent manifestations.

“The people of France are accomplishing their task, and those who have fallen have not fallen in vain, since they have increased the greatness of French history. *It remains for the living to complete and perfect the magnificent work of the dead.*”

One shudders to think what would have happened to France in those tragic hours if the Government had not rallied the majority of deputies to their cause.

So September 6th was a day of complete significance when the Chamber unanimously acclaimed the victorious armies of France and Clemenceau once more found words to extol the soldier and emphasise his determination to carry on till freedom was secure.

He says :

“Our soldiers, our great soldiers, the soldiers of civilisation, to give them their

proper name, are pushing back, are victoriously putting to confusion the hordes of barbarism. That task will be continued to the final completion which we owe to the great cause for which the finest and best of our French soldiers have been sacrificed. We shall fight on till the day when the old chains of the oldest oppressions of the past are broken and replaced by new constructions of justice and new developments of liberty."

For by that time victory was in sight.

What did the heroes who were fighting want, what did Clemenceau want when he saw the work of liberation to which he had devoted his life coming each day a little nearer completion? To fight was what they wanted, "to fight victoriously still and always till the moment the enemy understands that there is no further traffic possible between wrong and right."

On another occasion the Premier was given a great ovation by the Senate, who

rose to their feet and cheered his words to the echo. He had a great mission to perform : to stir up their energies and lift up their hearts. It is by having such leaders and such soldiers that victory is won.

It was a wonderful scene, the old man of nearly eighty haranguing the assembly in the most impressive silence. His speech was delivered in a strong voice and punctuated by vigorous gestures :

“ It was Germany who wanted a military decision and condemned us to take part in it. Our dead have given their blood as a token of their acceptance of the greatest challenge ever flung to the laws of civilised man. Let it be then as Germany wanted it, as Germany made it. The only thing we shall seek for is peace, and we want to make it a just one, a solid one, so that generations to come may be saved from the abominations of the past. . . . ”

Choking with emotion, the orator could

but make a gesture. His hands were trembling, his throat contracted, his eyes misty. He recovered himself with an effort, and his powerful voice rang out with this splendid anthem, to which the Senate responded amid a scene of indescribable enthusiasm :

“ Forward then, you children of the Motherland, forward to complete the work of liberating the peoples from the last frenzies of a vile power ! Forward to stainless victory ! The whole of France, the whole of thinking humanity is with you.”

.

Clemenceau has never failed to preserve the confidence of the country since ever he has been in power. I believe there is not a single democratic body, departmental assembly, municipal council, general council, chamber of commerce or congress that has not sent him an address of congratulation on his magnificent undertaking.

With their usual clear instinct, the people have judged rightly, and it is their deep thought that has been translated into words by the general councils in their congratulatory addresses to Clemenceau. They regard him as the great artisan of victory because he has known how to govern, that is to say, willed, worked for, and realised the unity of the allied peoples in face of the Teutonic coalition.

His reply to the addresses sent to him was pregnant with sound common sense and unalterable confidence. Sunk in the depths of irreparable defeat, "Prussian militarism will reap the shame of the greatest attempt at evil that a barbarous people could ever have dreamt of. The supreme obstacle to the establishment of right among men will disappear in the shouts of victory, and it will be our duty to make that victory a triumph of humanity."

To give a complete sketch of Clemenceau's life would mean writing a history

of the war—not of its combats and battles, but of its great divisions, of the great events which tried France in her darkest days and shed glory upon her in her brightest.

The armistice demanded by Bulgaria, the armistice demanded by Austria, and the armistice demanded by Germany, mark the culminating points in Clemenceau's career as a statesman. If there was ever a time when he sought personal benefit in politics, he has certainly no political axe to grind now, and certainly no personal interests to defend. He looks forward with a deep, sincere, and indisputable conviction to the day when circumstances will allow him to step back into the crowd from which he has issued for his glorious crusade. If he is humanitarian, he remains French before all and above all, for in his mind France represents "an idealist conception of humanity which has prevailed in the world and which makes it impossible to serve humanity to the detriment of France."

In the historic sitting on November 6th, 1918, when Clemenceau read to an enthusiastic Chamber the terms of the Austrian armistice and gave the conditions imposed on Germany, he declared :

“ I should like that at the moment when the dawn of great and splendid victories is breaking, our thoughts should be thoughts of union. And who demands that it should be so?—The Mother Country herself. In the great humanitarian crusade, in which you will not be alone, you know, I should like us to promise to be brothers, and if we are asked who inspired us with this thought, to answer with a little modification of the ancient war-cry : *France wills it ! France wills it.*”

One could almost write Clemenceau's life by simply quoting his own words. Six months before the preceding events, he had one of his many sudden whims. When he arrived at the Ministry one

morning in the early hours—he begins his overwhelming day's work early—he summoned an army doctor, and taking off his coat and waistcoat, said :

“ Please examine me ; I am a little troubled about my health. Tell me frankly if I am in a fit state to carry on the sacred work I have in hand six months longer. Six months, you understand ? ”

The doctor examined him carefully.

“ Well ? ” said Clemenceau, impatient for the diagnosis.

“ Excellent health,” replied the Major ;
“ you have many years to live yet——”

“ Six months is all I want,” answered the President of the Council. “ Thank you, doctor.”

His prevision was correct. Six months were sufficient to establish unity of command, to organise the country, to resist and to conquer.

Victory is here. And with victory
“ hope, splendid hope spreads her wings.”

But Clemenceau's patriotic mission is not finished.

"It is harder to win the peace," he says, "than to win the war. We must act so that France can take her worthy place in the world. It is more than ever necessary that she should pull herself together, that she should be disciplined and strong. I have confidence. . . ."

The Senate and then the Chamber have paid him the highest honour to which a Frenchman can aspire. The following is the text of their recommendation :

"Article 1.—The Armies and their leaders, the Government of the Republic, and Georges Clemenceau, citizen, President of the Council and Minister for War, and Marshal Foch, generalissimo, have deserved well of their country.

"Article 2.—The text of the present law will be engraved, so that it may remain permanent, in all the town-houses and in all the schools of the Republic."

What a moment that must have been for Clemenceau when he rose to announce to the representatives of the French people that the war was over.

After having read in the midst of tremendous applause the conditions of the armistice imposed on Germany, the President of the Council paid his tribute to France in her soldiers and in her recovered provinces :

“ In the name of the French people, in the name of the French Republic, greeting from France one and indivisible to our long-lost Alsace and Lorraine.

“ And then, honour to our great dead who have won victory for us !

“ We may say that before there was any armistice France was liberated by the power of her arms. And when the living return to the capital and pass before us marching to the Arc de Triomphe we shall acclaim them.

“ Let them be greeted in advance for the great work of social reconstruction.

“ Thanks to them, France, yesterday a soldier of God, to-day a soldier of Humanity, will always be the soldier of the Ideal.”

November 11th, 1918, an unforgettable day for France for all generations to come, will always mark for Clemenceau, whatever he may still do, a unique day in a life of effort, of patriotism, and of action.

Yea, truly, Georges Clemenceau, citizen, Premier of a great land, “has deserved well of his country.”

THE STATESMAN

CHAPTER VII

THE STATESMAN

THE crowning honour has been paid to Clemenceau. By the unanimous vote of the greatest assembly of nations the world has ever seen, he was elected on January 18th, 1919, President of the Peace Conference.

We cannot do better than quote the speeches delivered on that occasion by the representatives of America, Great Britain, and Italy.

President Wilson in proposing M. Clemenceau as President, said :

“ I have the great honour to propose as definitive president of this Conference the French Premier, M. Clemenceau. I shall doubtless do so in con-

formity with usage. I should do it even if it were only a question of paying homage to the French Republic, but I do it also because I desire, and you certainly desire with me, to pay homage to the man himself. France, as it is, would alone deserve this honour, but we are to-day in her capital, and it is here that this great Conference has met. France, by her sufferings and sacrifices during the war, deserves a special tribute. Moreover, Paris is her ancient and splendid capital, where more than once these great assemblages on which the fate of the world has depended have met.

“ I am happy to think that the meeting which is beginning crowns the series of these meetings. This Conference may be considered in some respects as the final crowning of the diplomatic history of the world up to this day, for never have so many nations been represented at the same time to solve problems which in so high a degree interest the whole world. Moreover, this meeting signifies for us

the end of this terrible war, which threatened to destroy civilisation and the world itself. It is a delightful sensation for us to feel that we are meeting at a moment when this terrible menace has ceased to exist.

“ But it is not only to France, it is to the man who is her great servant that we wish to pay homage and to do honour. We have learnt, since we have had relations with him, and since he has been at the head of the French Government, to admire the power of his direction and the force and good sense of his actions. But, more than this, those who know him, those who have worked in close connection with him, have acquired for him a real affection. Those who, like ourselves, have seen him work in these recent times know how much he is united with us, and with what ardour he is working for that which we ourselves desire. For we all desire the same thing. We desire before all to lift from the shoulders of humanity the frightful

weight which is pressing on them, so that humanity, released from this weight, may at last return joyfully to work. Thus, gentlemen, it is not only to the Premier of the French Republic, it is to M. Clemenceau that I propose you should give the presidency of this assemblage."

Mr. Lloyd George, who spoke next, said :

" Gentlemen, it is not only a pleasure for me but a real privilege to support in the name of the British Empire the motion which has been proposed by President Wilson. I shall do it for the reasons which the President has just expressed with so much eloquence. It is homage to a man that we wish to pay before all. When I was at school M. Clemenceau was already one of the moving forces in French politics. Already his renown had spread far. And, were it not for this memory of my childhood, I should be tempted to believe the

legend which is commonly spread abroad of the eternal youth of M. Clemenceau. In all the conferences at which we have been present the most alert, the most vigorous, in a word, the youngest man, was always M. Clemenceau. By the freshness of his mind and his indefatigable energy he displayed his youth at every moment. He is indeed 'the grand young man' of France. But nothing will give us greater pleasure than to see him take the place which we propose that he should accept. No one is better qualified for that place. We have often had discussions together. We have often been in agreement and sometimes we have disagreed, and in that case we have always been in the habit of expressing our opinions with all the force and vigour which belong to two Celts like ourselves.

"I believe that in the debates of this Conference there will at first inevitably be delays, but I guarantee from my knowledge of M. Clemenceau that there

will be no time wasted. That is indispensable. The world is thirsting for peace. Millions of men are waiting to return to their normal life, and they will not forgive us too long delays. I am sure that M. Clemenceau will not allow useless delays to occur. He is one of the greatest living orators, but he knows that the finest eloquence is that which gets things done and that the worst is that which delays them. Another reason for congratulating him on occupying the place which we are about to give him is his indomitable courage, of which he has given proof in days of difficulty. In these days his energy and presence of mind have done more than all the acts of us others to ensure victory. There is no man of whom one can say that he has contributed more to surmount these terrible difficulties which were so close to the final triumph. He represents the admirable energy, courage, and resource of his great people, and that is why I desire to add my voice to that of President

Wilson and to ask for his election to the Presidency of the Peace Conference."

Baron Sonnino said :

"Gentlemen, on behalf of the Italian Delegation, I associate myself cordially with the proposal of President Wilson, supported by Mr. Lloyd George, and I ask you to give the presidency of the Peace Conference to M. Clemenceau. I am happy to be able in these circumstances to testify to my good will and admiration for France and for the eminent statesman who is at the head of her Government."

M. Clemenceau, in reply, delivered what is probably the finest speech of his life. It foreshadows the fulfilment of his task in the establishment of a system of practical idealism in the League of Nations, and proves the indomitable energy and fine emotion of the statesman :

“Gentlemen, you would not understand it if, after listening to the words of the two eminent men who have just spoken, I were to keep silent. I cannot elude the necessity of expressing my lively gratitude, my deep gratitude, both to the illustrious President Wilson and to the Prime Minister of Great Britain, as well as to Baron Sonnino, for the words which they have uttered. In the past, in the days of my youth—long ago now, as Mr. Lloyd George has reminded me—when I travelled over America and England, I used always to hear the French blamed for that excess of politeness which led them beyond the boundaries of the truth. Listening to the American statesman and the British statesman, I asked myself whether in Paris they had not acquired our national vice of flattering urbanity.

“It is necessary, gentlemen, to point out that my election is due necessarily to lofty international tradition and to the time-honoured courtesy shown to-

wards the country which has the honour to welcome the Peace Conference in its capital. The proofs of 'friendship'—as they will allow me to call it—of President Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George touched me profoundly, because in these proofs may be seen a new force for all three of us which will enable us, with the help of this entire Conference, to carry through the arduous task entrusted to us. I draw new confidence from it for the success of our efforts.

"President Wilson has good authority for his remark that we have here for the first time a collection of delegates from all the civilised peoples of the earth. The greater the sanguinary catastrophe which devastated and ruined one of the richest regions of France, the more ample and more splendid should be the reparation—not merely the reparation for material acts, the ordinary reparation, if I may venture to say so, which is due to us—but the nobler and loftier reparation we are going to try to secure, so

that the peoples may at last escape from this fatal embrace, which, heaping up ruins and sorrows, terrorises the populations and prevents them from devoting themselves freely to their work for fear of the enemies who may spring up at any moment. It is a great and noble ambition that has come to us all. We must hope that success will crown our efforts. This can only be if we have our ideas clear cut and well defined.

“ I said in the Chamber of Deputies some days ago, and I make a point of repeating the statement here, that success is possible only if we remain firmly united. We have come here as friends. We must pass through that door as brothers. That is the first reflection which I am anxious to express to you. Everything must be subordinated to the necessity for a closer and closer union between the peoples which have taken part in this great war. The Society of Nations has its being here, it has its being in you. It is for you to make it live,

and for that there is no sacrifice to which we are not ready to consent. I do not doubt that as you are all of this disposition we shall arrive at this result, but only on condition that we exercise impartial pressure on ourselves to reconcile what in appearance may be opposing interests in the higher view of a greater, happier, and better humanity. That, gentlemen, is what I had to say to you.

“ I am touched beyond all expression by the proof of confidence and regard which you have been kind enough to give me. The programme of the Conference, the aim marked out by President Wilson, is no longer merely peace for the territories, great and small, with which we are directly concerned ; it is no longer merely a peace for the continents, it is peace for the peoples. This programme speaks for itself ; there is nothing to be added to it. Let us try, gentlemen, to do our work speedily and well. . . . ”

Continuing he said :

“ It is a very vast field. But we beg of you to begin by examining the question as to the responsibility of the authors of the war. I do not need to set forth our reasons for this. If we wish to establish justice in the world we can do so now, for we have won victory and can impose the penalties demanded by justice. We shall insist on the imposition of penalties on the authors of the abominable crimes committed during the war. . . .

“ It only remains for me to say, gentlemen, that the order of the day for our next sitting will begin with the question of the Society of Nations. Our order of the day, gentlemen, is now brought to an end.”

We cannot close our record of Clemenceau on a note of peace. He was born a fighter and will remain a fighter in the cause of Right to the end of his days.

The Grand Young Man of Europe in almost his last public utterance sounds a

note of warning against over-confidence, against an over-hasty assumption that the reign of Peace has begun :

“ If it is said that the war is won, it would perhaps be more accurate to say that there is a lull in the storm. At the very least, it is necessary to provide for all eventualities. Recent discoveries have enabled us to pierce the enemy's designs to a greater extent than hitherto. They were not merely a dream of military domination on the part of Prussia, but a definite conspiracy expressly aiming at the extermination of France. Industrially France is extremely difficult to reconstitute, whereas Germany has kept her factories intact and ready to start working efficiently forthwith. Indeed, industrially and commercially, as between France and Prussia, the victory is the latter's. Financially and by reason of the blockade, the war debt of Germany is almost entirely domestic and can easily be repudiated, while that of France must

be paid. In the immediate future we shall have to pay regularly abroad immense sums, by way of interest solely, out of our internal resources.

“ Even as regards the military triumph of France over Germany, there are certain disquieting features in the situation. The Allies have taken over the German Navy and in a great measure disarmed the enemy, but Russia, certainly in a state of chaos, but fruitful all the same, remains, and from it the Germans can draw a great deal of support. With the British Army demobilised, the American Army returned home, and France isolated, there might be a danger of Germany's reopening the debate of arms. This might embarrass us but for the very heartening assurances of President Wilson in the Chamber of Deputies. The League of Nations must be profoundly sustained by the conviction of the peoples of France and America and by the determination of the latter to abandon its traditional policy of isolation. France will face all these

problems without fear and without reproach. All our plans are based on the splendid foundation laid by President Wilson."

THE END

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